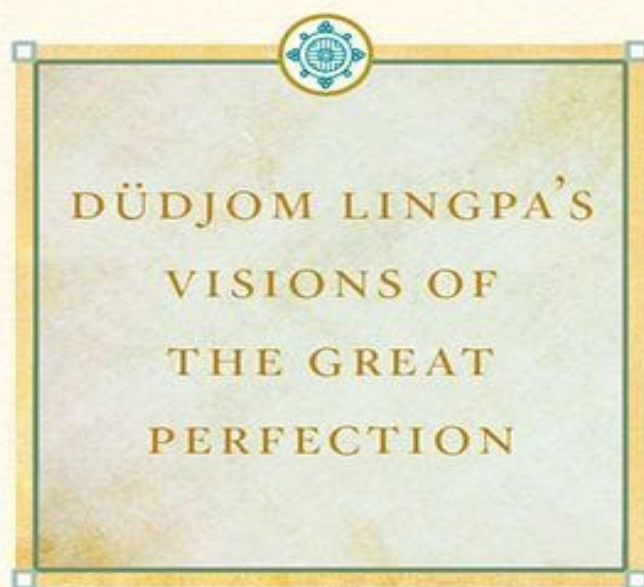


HEART OF THE GREAT PERFECTION



Translated by B. Alan Wallace

Foreword by Sogyal Rinpoche

DÜDJOM LINGPA'S VISIONS OF THE GREAT PERFECTION

This three-volume series presents English translations of Düdjom Lingpa's five visionary teachings on *Dzokchen*, the Great Perfection, along with three essential commentaries by his disciples.

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The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra, Düdjom Lingpa

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HEART OF THE GREAT PERFECTION

DÜDJOM LINGPA'S
VISIONS OF THE GREAT PERFECTION,
VOLUME I



Foreword by Sogyal Rinpoche

Translated by B. Alan Wallace

Edited by Dion Blundell



DÜDJOM LINGPA (1835–1904) was one of the foremost tantric masters of his time. His visionary teachings on the Great Perfection (*Dzokchen*) are the pinnacle of practice in Tibet’s oldest Buddhist school.

Heart of the Great Perfection, the first of three volumes devoted to the Dzokchen visions of Düdjom Lingpa, contains four of his classic works explaining the view and practice of this signature style of meditation.

- ▶ *The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*: This work is considered the root distillation of Düdjom Lingpa’s wisdom.
- ▶ *Essence of Clear Meaning*: This definitive commentary, which unpacks the quintessential verses of The Sharp Vajra, is based on Düdjom Lingpa’s oral teachings recorded by his disciple Pema Tashi.
- ▶ *The Foolish Dharma of an Idiot Clothed in Mud and Feathers*: Düdjom Lingpa narrates the essential Dharma teachings from the perspective of an old man rejecting superficial appearances.
- ▶ *The Enlightened View of Samantabhadra*: A masterful exposition of the Great Perfection is revealed as a dialogue between wisdom beings who bestow a treasury of pith instructions and specific advice for practitioners.

The teachings in these pages, which have inspired generations of Tibetans, are now available in English for the first time.

B. ALAN WALLACE has served as the interpreter for both the Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoché and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Today he is a prolific writer and translator of Tibetan Buddhism. He has edited, translated, authored, and contributed to many books including *Stilling the Mind* and *The Attention Revolution*.

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VEN. GYATRUL RINPOCHE
SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

The revelations of the great treasure revealer, enlightened master, and fearless conduct yogi from eastern Tibet Heruka Düdjom Lingpa are treasure troves of teaching, advice, and insights into the human mind's true nature of wisdom awareness. For those who connect to the lineage through empowerment, transmission, and instruction under the guidance of qualified lineage masters, these teachings hold the key to understanding the true meaning of permanent happiness and benefit. Having known Alan for many years and observed his enthusiastic devotion and passion for Dharma in general and especially for the teachings of the Great Perfection as transmitted through Heruka Düdjom Lingpa's revelations, I am certain that he has done his very best to make these translations as accurate as possible and I rejoice in this effort from the bottom of my heart. This trilogy of English translations is a wondrous gift for disciples of the tradition. May there be great waves of benefit for countless sentient beings!

Gyatrul Rinpoché
Tashi Choling



Foreword

TWELVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, one of the most dramatic and daring spiritual undertakings in history took place in Central Asia. The entire teaching of the Buddha, as it existed at the time in India and the Himalayan region, was imported and transplanted in Tibet. Sometimes I try to imagine what it must have been like to be there at that spectacular moment. To see the unforgettable, awe-inspiring figure of Guru Rinpoché, Padmasambhava, whose protection and inspiration enabled this whole revolutionary endeavor to unfold. To witness the great Madhyamaka scholar and abbot Śāntarakṣita, who brought with him the vast heritage of Nālandā Monastery, and the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen, the thirty-seventh in his line, who sponsored this massive and imaginative program. Or to gaze in wonder as Guru Rinpoché stood atop Mount Hepori and bound the spirits of Tibet under his command, and to watch the first monastic university, called Samyé “The Inconceivable,” gradually take shape. If you had been there, you would have caught sight of scores of realized and learned paṇḍitas, who had made the arduous journey across the Himalayas and were working with translators to render the sutras, tantras, and treatises into Tibetan. Transmissions of various kinds were taking place, the first seven Tibetan monastics were being ordained, and Guru Padmasambhava was opening the maṇḍala of the Secret Mantrayāna teachings at Chimpu for his twenty-five disciples. They were the first saints and siddhas of Tibet, headed by Guru Rinpoché’s closest disciple and consort, Yeshé Tsogyal, the king himself, and the virtuoso translator Vairocana. What a glorious and momentous time this must have been! And although history tells us that this did not happen without opposition and resistance, both human and nonhuman, as Kyapjé Düdjom Rinpoché explains, “Because the kingdom was protected by the true Dharma, Tibet is known to have enjoyed the happiness of paradise.”

For about fifty-five years, it is said, the Great Guru stayed in Tibet and the Himalayan regions, sowing his blessings into the environment and the psyche of the Tibetan people. Foreseeing the needs of future generations and the limits of people’s understanding at the time, Padmasambhava concealed countless *terma*

treasure teachings in the landscape and in the unchanging pure awareness of his realized disciples. The terma teachings remain concealed until the precise moment in time when they will be of maximum benefit and relevance, and they are then revealed by a continuing series of incarnations of the same twenty-five disciples whom Padmasambhava had entrusted with his teachings and his blessings. As a result, the ancient Nyingma tradition of early translations that follows Padmasambhava's vision comprises both the long, unbroken *kama* lineage of canonical teachings and the close lineage of terma treasures. And at the heart of the Nyingma tradition flows the deepest current of wisdom within the Buddhist teachings of Tibet, the pinnacle of all spiritual vehicles — the Great Perfection, *Dzokpachenpo*, with its living lineage of realization stretching from the Primordial Buddha Samantabhadra down to the present day.

One of Guru Rinpoché's twenty-five disciples showed remarkable aptitude at a very early age. He learned Sanskrit with ease and was quickly chosen to be part of the group of Tibetan translators. Drokpen Khyeuchung Lotsawa lived as a *ngakpa*, a lay mantric practitioner, wearing his hair long and dressing in white. He mastered all the secret Mantrayāna teachings Padmasambhava conferred on him and became a great siddha. His realization and power were such that he could summon birds from the sky through his mere gaze or a gesture of his hand, and then, it is said, give them teachings. Like others among the twenty-five disciples, Khyeuchung Lotsawa reincarnated over the centuries as a series of realized masters who spread and deepened the teachings of the Buddha and brought enormous benefit to beings. In the nineteenth century he appeared as the great treasure revealer, visionary, and powerful mystic Dūdjom Lingpa.

I first came to learn about this amazing master after meeting his incarnation, Kyapjé Dūdjom Rinpoché, who became one of my most beloved teachers. I discovered that everything about Dūdjom Lingpa was extraordinary: his birth in 1835 in the Serta Valley of the Golok region on Guru Rinpoché's day, the tenth day of the waxing moon; his amazing life story, which was a continuous stream of visions, dreams, and prophecies starting at the age of three; the way in which he received visionary teachings of the greatest depth and clarity directly from enlightened beings of every kind; his mastery of earth termas, mind termas, and pure visions; the sheer profundity of his revelations, such as those contained in these volumes; his visits to pure lands, including Sukhāvātī and the Copper Colored Mountain paradise of Guru Rinpoché — a visit that spanned one human day but for him lasted twelve years; and his continuous perception of enlightened beings and pure realms.

No less astounding was the way in which he predicted his own incarnation, Dūdjom Rinpoché Jikdral Yeshe Dorjé. Having spent most of his life in eastern Tibet and the Golok area, Dūdjom Lingpa received a number of visionary instructions that he should go to Pemakö, perhaps the most famous of the “hidden lands” of Padmasambhava and one that had been opened by Dūdjom Lingpa’s earlier incarnation, Rikzin Dūdul Dorjé (1615–72). It lay far to the southeast and was a region of legendary, majestic beauty and sacred significance. There, Guru Rinpoché said, “All the mountains open like blossoming flowers, all the rivers naturally resound mantras and flow with nectar, and rainbows arch across the trees and bushes.” During his lifetime, Dūdjom Lingpa was unable to travel to Pemakö. Yet he knew of the devastation that within decades would ravage Tibet, and not long before he passed away in 1904, he called his disciples together and told them to pack up and leave for Pemakö: “Now in this final age of degeneration, it’s time to go to the hidden land of Pemakö. Anyone who puts his or her trust in me should go there as well. But this old man will get there before you youngsters arrive!”

Just as he predicted, when his disciples eventually made their way to Pemakö, they discovered a three-year-old child who called them by name, spoke not in the local language but in the Golok dialect, and had already asked his parents to prepare for a party of guests. The young boy was Dūdjom Lingpa’s reincarnation. It is said that Dūdjom Rinpoché was conceived while Dūdjom Lingpa was still alive, for there are no limits that can possibly impede the enlightened mind.

As I pay homage here to Dūdjom Lingpa, I would like to take this opportunity to share a few of my memories of Kyapjé Dūdjom Rinpoché, whom I had the privilege and blessing of knowing personally. I first met him thanks to my master Jamyang Khyentsé Chökyi Lodrö. He always used to talk about what a wonderful and realized master Dūdjom Rinpoché was, and how he was the living representative of Guru Padmasambhava. They held each other in the highest esteem. In Lhasa, where they met in the 1950s, Dūdjom Rinpoché confided to Trulshik Rinpoché that he considered Jamyang Khyentsé the holiest master they could ever hope to find. Dūdjom Rinpoché moved to Kalimpong in India in around 1957, and my master took me to meet him and receive his blessing. Jamyang Khyentsé told him he had never had the privilege of receiving the entire transmission of his terma revelations and asked him for a special blessing. Dūdjom Rinpoché gave him the “seal of authorization” for all of his own terma treasures. He also conferred on Jamyang Khyentsé the

empowerments and instructions for his mind treasure of Dorjé Drolö, the wild, wrathful aspect of Guru Padmasambhava. They wrote long-life prayers for each other. My master spoke of Düdjom Rinpoché as “the authentic great Sovereign Lord of the extraordinary and profound secret terma treasures.” Düdjom Rinpoché called him “the sole champion in our time of the great and supreme path of the Vajra Heart Essence, the magical wisdom manifestation of the lotus-born lord Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra.”

Some years later, I went to visit Düdjom Rinpoché in Kalimpong and by coincidence found myself translating for one of his American disciples. It was then that I realized just how extraordinary he was. By the end of his teaching, a pointing-out instruction on the nature of mind, tears were running down my face, and I understood what Jamyang Khyentsé had meant when he said this was an exceptional master. I instantly felt enormous faith in him, and there and then I requested Düdjom Rinpoché to be my master and grant me teachings.

Düdjom Lingpa’s revelations and Düdjom Rinpoché’s terma cycles are together known as the *Düdjom Tersar*, the “New Treasures of Düdjom,” which are new in the sense that they are still fresh with the warm breath of the *ḍākinīs*, and because there is only one master in the lineage between Guru Rinpoché and the practitioners of the treasures. Although I see these two great masters as one and the same, their outward characters were quite different. Düdjom Lingpa was a commanding and unpredictable figure, well known for his wrathful demeanor and behavior. Düdjom Rinpoché describes how to visualize him: “His body is red in color, his beard reaching as far as his heart, and his eyes are open wide, staring steadily straight ahead. His long hair is mostly tied up in a knot on top of his head with a small sacred book, while the rest tumbles loosely over his shoulders. He wears a gown of reddish brown silk, a shawl of white cotton, and conch-shell earrings, with a sword of wisdom thrust through his belt. His right hand wields a vajra in the sky, and his left hand rolls a *purba* dagger of meteoric iron. He sits with his left leg stretched out slightly in the posture of royal play.”

In marked contrast, Düdjom Rinpoché had about him an air of captivating kindness, gentleness, and serenity. In fact, he used to tell a story about his predecessor that always brought a twinkle to his eye. When Düdjom Lingpa was about to pass away and leave this world, some of his disciples approached him timidly and begged him to return in a more peaceful form. He chuckled and said, “Well, all right. But don’t complain if I am *too* peaceful.”

Like his previous incarnation, Düdjom Rinpoché was a very great Dzokchen master. It is said of him that he was the body emanation of Khyeuchung

Lotsawa, the speech emanation of Yeshé Tsogyal, and the mind emanation of Guru Padmasambhava. In *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, I tried to sum up some of his characteristics: “He was small, with a beautiful and gentle face, exquisite hands, and a delicate, almost feminine presence. Like a yogin, he wore his hair long and tied up in a knot; his eyes always glittered with secret amusement. His voice seemed the voice of compassion itself, soft and a little hoarse.” One of Padmasambhava’s terma prophecies captured his qualities with remarkable prescience: “In a noble family there will appear an emanation of Khyeuchung Lotsawa bearing the name Jñāna, keeping the yogic discipline of a master of mantras, his appearance not fixed in any way, his behavior spontaneous like a child, and endowed with piercing wisdom. He will reveal new termas and safeguard the ancient ones, and he will guide whoever has a connection with him to the Glorious Copper Colored Mountain in Ngayab Ling.”

Düdjom Rinpoché, I learned, began receiving termas when he was a young boy, and he met Guru Rinpoché and Yeshé Tsogyal in a vision when he was only thirteen. Although he revealed his own powerful terma treasures, he decided to prioritize maintaining, protecting, and spreading the older termas as well as the kama tradition of the Nyingmapas. While still quite young, he was regarded as a supreme master of the Great Perfection, and by the time he was in his thirties he had already accomplished an enormous amount. When other lamas saw his famous prayer *Calling the Lama from Afar*, which he composed at the age of thirty and which captured completely his profound realization, they immediately recognized him as a great tertön and Dzokchen master. Chökyi Nyima Rinpoché told me that his father, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoché, one of the greatest teachers of Dzokchen and Mahāmudrā in recent times, used to say that if anyone ever wondered what a true Dzokchen master and practitioner was like, they only had to look at Düdjom Rinpoché. His eyes always sparkled with a kind of freshness and vibrant clarity. Unencumbered by opinions of good or bad, and ever carefree, spacious, and relaxed, Düdjom Rinpoché had about him a child-like innocence — you could call it an enlightened purity.

His work in compiling the Nyingma kama, which he began at the age of seventy-four, paralleled the achievement of Jamgön Kongtrul in compiling the treasure teachings in the *Precious Treasury of Termas*. He saved many precious texts and sacred relics from loss, and with meticulous care, he compiled, preserved, emended, and annotated the older texts and practices, to the extent that there seems hardly anything he did not have a hand in perfecting. In fact Düdjom Rinpoché’s achievements for the Nyingma tradition as a whole were

monumental. He gave the transmission of the *Precious Treasury of Termas* ten times, and he transmitted the kama and *The Hundred Thousand Tantras of the Nyingmapas* as well as countless treasure cycles and priceless teachings. Unanimously requested to become the supreme head of the Nyingma tradition, his own revelations and writings fill twenty-five volumes, among which his *History of the Nyingmapas* and *Fundamentals of the Nyingmapas* are classics. His compositions were amazing, his scholarship famous, his calligraphy much copied, his poetry lucid yet profound, and his detailed knowledge of every aspect of Vajrayāna practice and ritual truly phenomenal.

Düdjom Rinpoché also played a huge part in reestablishing Tibetan culture and education in exile, and he composed his *History of Tibet* at the request of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. On occasion, His Holiness has expressed his regret at not having been able to receive transmissions directly from Düdjom Rinpoché, although when he embarked on a retreat on the Kagyé — Eight Great Practice Maṇḍalas — according to the *sangwa gyachen* pure visions of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Düdjom Rinpoché wrote a practice guide for him that he found outstanding. Among Düdjom Rinpoché's countless disciples were the most eminent lamas of the last century, including the most senior masters of Mindröling and Dorjé Drak monasteries, and he had innumerable followers all over Tibet and the Himalayas, Europe, America, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. When he gave the transmission of the *New Treasures of Düdjom* at Boudhanath in Nepal in 1977–78, thousands upon thousands flocked to attend.

After my master Jamyang Khyentsé passed away, Düdjom Rinpoché held me with all his care and compassion, and I had the great privilege of serving as his translator for a number of years. I quickly discovered that he had a unique way of inspiring the realization of the innermost nature of mind. It was through the very way he spoke. The words he used were simple and down to earth, and yet they had a way of penetrating right into your heart. As the instructions on the nature of mind flowed effortlessly from his wisdom mind, it seemed as if he became the teaching of Dzokpachenpo itself, and his words served to gather you into the actual experience. Through his presence, and through his gaze, he created a subtle but electrifying atmosphere, enveloping you in his wisdom mind, so that you could not help but feel the pure awareness that he was pointing out. I can only compare it to sitting in front of a blazing, open fire — you cannot help but feel warm. It was as simple as that.

Düdjom Rinpoché demonstrated, again and again, that when a great master directs the blessing of his wisdom mind, something extraordinary and very

powerful can take place. All your ordinary thoughts and thinking are disarmed, and you arrive face to face with the deeper nature — the original face — of your own mind. In Dūdjom Rinpoché's words, "all the stirrings of discursive thoughts melt, dissolve, and slip into the expanse of *rigpa*, your pure awareness, which is like a cloudless sky. All their power and strength is lost to the *rigpa* awareness." At that moment everything drops, a completely different dimension opens up, and you glimpse the sky-like nature of mind. With Dūdjom Rinpoché I came to understand that what the master does, through the power and blessing of his realization, is to make the naked truth of the teaching come alive in you, connecting you to your buddha nature. And you? You recognize, in a blaze of gratitude, that there is not, and could never be, any separation between the master's wisdom mind and the nature of your own mind. Dūdjom Rinpoché said just this in his *Calling the Lama from Afar*:

Since pure awareness of nowness is the real buddha,
in openness and contentment I found the lama in my heart.
When we realize this unending natural mind is the very nature of the lama,
then there is no need for attached, grasping, or weeping prayers or artificial
complaints.
By simply relaxing in this uncontrived, open, and natural state,
we obtain the blessing of aimless self-liberation of whatever arises.

At the same time, Dūdjom Rinpoché wore his realization and learning with such simplicity and ease. I sometimes felt that his outward appearance was so subtle and understated that it would have been easy for a newcomer to miss who he really was. Once in 1976 I traveled with him from France to the United States. I shall never forget that flight for as long as I live. Dūdjom Rinpoché was always very humble, but now and then he would say something that betrayed what an incredible master he was. At one point I was sitting next to him and he was gazing out the window at the Atlantic Ocean when he said quietly, "May I bless all those I fly over, all the beings living in the ocean down below." It was the way he said it that struck me and sent a shiver down my spine. I could feel that there was simply no question: He actually did possess the power to bless and relieve the suffering of countless living beings. And beyond any shadow of doubt, there and then, they were receiving his blessing. In that moment I realized what a great master he was — and not just a master, but a buddha.

To tell the truth, even now, thirty years or so since he left this world, Dūdjom

Rinpoché's greatness still continues to dawn on me, day after day. The gratitude I feel toward him is boundless, and not a day goes by when I do not think of his words:

Having purified the great delusion, the heart's darkness,
the radiant light of the unobscured sun continuously rises.
This good fortune is the kindness of the lama, our only father and mother;
Lama of unrepayable kindness, I only remember you.

I must also mark my gratitude to Düdjom Rinpoché's spiritual wife, Sangyum Kushok Rikzin Wangmo, who was one of the greatest *ḍākinīs* I have ever known. She played a unique and crucial role in Rinpoché's life. With her extraordinary love, care, and magnetic charm, she provided the perfect environment for Rinpoché, so that the teachings and revelations could pour from his wisdom mind. She lengthened his life and enabled him to stay among us for as long as he did, longer in fact than had been predicted by his masters, so as to teach, guide, and bless so many disciples and benefit countless sentient beings. Not only do I have the greatest devotion and respect for her but also a deep feeling of love, and I feel honored that both she and Rinpoché made me truly feel like part of their family.

How impossible it seems to try to measure in words the qualities and realization of masters like Düdjom Lingpa and Düdjom Rinpoché! Even their contributions to the future of the Dharma, I feel, are fathomless and not widely known. The longer I live, the more convinced I am that the Dzokchen teachings have enormous potential at this time to touch and awaken people *all over the world*, people from any country and any kind of background. I have heard a number of prophecies about these teachings and how powerful, transformative, and relevant they are at critical points in our history — at times such as this. One prophecy says, “In this dark age, the heart essence of Samantabhadra will blaze like fire.” If these predictions are to come true, I know it will have a lot to do with the two great masters Düdjom Lingpa and Düdjom Rinpoché and their epic contributions to the Dharma, to sentient beings, and to the world.

Just look at the impact of their work: Düdjom Lingpa's prolific treasures have spread all over Tibet, east and west, the Himalayan lands like Bhutan, and now the Western world as well. His revelations, edited by Düdjom Rinpoché himself, fill twenty large volumes. Then, Düdjom Lingpa's eight sons were all incarnations of great masters, perhaps the most renowned being Jikmé Tenpé

Nyima, the Third Dodrupchen Rinpoché, who was my master Jamyang Khyentsé's root lama, and whose writings on Dzokchen are treasured by H. H. the Dalai Lama. Düdjom Lingpa's daughters were considered to be *ḍākinīs*. It was not only his children who were exceptional but his students as well. In the prayer that Düdjom Rinpoché composed celebrating Düdjom Lingpa's extraordinary life story, there is this verse:

Your eight sons, holders of the family line, were the eight great bodhisattvas,
thirteen supreme disciples accomplished the body of light,
and one thousand attained the stage of vidyādhara —
to you, who established this victorious line of realized beings, I pray.

Thirteen of Düdjom Lingpa's disciples attained the rainbow body, and in his prophecies Düdjom Lingpa was told that a hundred might even attain the great transference rainbow body. As Düdjom Rinpoché wrote, "In this precious lineage of ours, this is not just ancient history. For today, just as in the past, there are those who through the paths of *trekchö* and *tögal* have attained the final realization and have dissolved their gross material bodies into rainbow bodies of radiant light." In his *History*, he wrote, "It is impossible to estimate the number of those who passed into the rainbow body by following the paths of the profound treasures of the Great Perfection..." and he lists a number of those who attained the rainbow body, including the father of my own tutor Lama Gyurdrak, a simple man called Sönam Namgyal whose body dissolved into light, leaving nothing behind but his nails and hair. These were offered to Jamyang Khyentsé, who verified it as an actual case of a rainbow body. Even today we continue to hear of instances of the rainbow body, for example the well-known case of Khenpo Achö in eastern Tibet in 1998.

There is a story about Düdjom Lingpa that I find fascinating. In the mid 1850s he had a dream in which he was given a conch shell and asked to blow it in each of the four directions. The loudest sound was in the west, and he was told in the dream that this was a sign that disciples particularly suited to him were to be found in the western regions, where his renown would spread and where he would have countless followers in the future.

Something uncannily similar happened to Düdjom Rinpoché, and he told us the story many years later, in France. One of the lamas who had traveled to Pemakö to find Düdjom Lingpa's incarnation was Ling Lama Orgyen Chöjor Gyatso, an accomplished Dzokchen master who had been a disciple of Patrul

Rinpoché before becoming a close student of Düdjom Lingpa. He was one of Düdjom Rinpoché's first teachers. He told Düdjom Rinpoché that Patrul Rinpoché had asked Düdjom Lingpa's son Jikmé Tenpé Nyima, the Third Dordrupchen, to give a teaching on the *Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* at the age of eight. Orgyen Chöjor Gyatso reasoned that if the son could do so at eight, then the father — in other words Düdjom Lingpa's reincarnation — should do so by the age of seven and a half at the latest. So he requested Düdjom Rinpoché to teach from the first chapters of Śāntideva's great work. When the teaching had finished, Orgyen Chöjor Gyatso was overjoyed, and he invited Düdjom Rinpoché to go outside and sound a conch in each of the four directions. In the south there was a beautiful tone, but in the west an even louder and sweeter sound rang out. Orgyen Chöjor Gyatso told him that his work would be of immeasurable benefit in the south and in the west.

Thinking of this, how meaningful it is that Düdjom Rinpoché came and taught and blessed so many people in the West. And how moving it is that he chose to pass away in Europe, in France, thereby blessing the Western world with the power of his enlightenment and confirming the arrival of these teachings in lands that had not known them before. The fact that Sangyum Kushok Rikzin Wangmo also chose to leave this world in the United States points to the same truth. It is as if they were placing their seal on Düdjom Rinpoché's celebrated aspiration:

May the living tradition of Guru Padmasambhava, Bodhisattva Śāntarakṣita, and
the Dharmaking Trisong Detsen
spread throughout the world in all directions.
May the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha be present in the minds of all,
inseparably, at all times, bringing peace, happiness, and well-being.

Just as Düdjom Rinpoché's life covered most of the twentieth century, Düdjom Lingpa's spanned the nineteenth century, a time when a number of great masters were pioneering a far-reaching renewal of Buddhism in Tibet, in the open-minded, ecumenical spirit of *Rimé*. They included masters such as Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo, Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thayé, Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa, and Jamgön Mipam Rinpoché. Interestingly, it was Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo who sent his own close disciple, the incarnate lama Gyurmé Ngedön Wangpo, to Düdjom Lingpa. He told him: "You have a karmic link with Düdjom Lingpa from past lives, so meeting him will be enormously useful to the teachings and

to beings.” Gyurmé Ngedön Wangpo became the great treasure revealer’s heart son and custodian of his treasures, and he stayed with him until he passed away. He then traveled to Pemakö, where he recognized Kyapjé Düdjom Rinpoché as the reincarnation of Düdjom Lingpa, became his root lama, and gave him many of the most important transmissions, including Düdjom Lingpa’s revelations.

My own predecessor, the treasure revealer Lerab Lingpa, who was born in 1856, was somewhat younger than Düdjom Lingpa, and I know of no record of their having met. And yet their lives were mysteriously entwined. Lerab Lingpa was a very close confidant, student, and teacher of Dodrupchen Jikmé Tenpé Nyima, Düdjom Lingpa’s eldest son, and he was also the master of Düdjom Lingpa’s youngest son, Dorjé Dradul, as well as three of Düdjom Lingpa’s grandsons, Terchen Kunzang Nyima, Sönam Deutsen, and Tenzin Nyima. In fact, Lerab Lingpa composed and gave to Dorjé Dradul a guru yoga practice that focuses on the lama as embodying the Primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, Guru Padmasambhava, Dorjé Drolö, Düdul Dorjé, Düdjom Lingpa, Jikmé Tenpé Nyima, and himself. On another occasion, one day in 1923, Lerab Lingpa experienced a vision of Guru Rinpoché and a throng of ḍākinīs, who gave him a five-part *ladrup* — a sādhana practice for accomplishing the lama — in which Düdjom Lingpa, Khanyam Lingpa, Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo, Kusum Lingpa, and Jamgön Kongtrul each appear in the form of a deity. Düdjom Lingpa manifests as Dorjé Drolö. In the vision, Lerab Lingpa was told how urgent it was that he accomplish this practice.

The more we look, the more it seems that Düdjom Lingpa’s impact on the spread of the Buddha’s teachings is endless, and we can detect his traces everywhere. There is one more intriguing link between Düdjom Lingpa and Terchen Lerab Lingpa, one that had a momentous significance for the flourishing of the Dharma. In 1980, the great Khenchen Jigmé Phuntsok Rinpoché (1933–2004), one of the incarnations of Lerab Lingpa, founded his Buddhist Academy in the Larung Valley in Serta. He built his own residence on the very same site as Düdjom Lingpa’s hermitage, a place also associated with the thirteen disciples who attained the rainbow body. One of Düdjom Lingpa’s prophecies had in fact predicted that after a hundred years, when only the name of the Buddhadharma remained, in this very place a master would come to fan the flames of the embers and make the Nyingma teachings blaze once more. It was there that the truly remarkable Larung Gar Five Sciences Buddhist Academy developed, a center of excellence setting the highest standards of study and practice, seeing six hundred fully trained khenpos graduate in the first

twenty years, and putting in motion a renaissance of Buddhist teaching and practice in eastern Tibet.

I am deeply touched to be asked to write this foreword to a collection of translations of Dūdjom Lingpa’s Dzokchen teachings, and I do so out of my deep and undying devotion to Kyapjé Dūdjom Rinpoché and Sangyum Rikzin Wangmo, to his lineage, and to all the masters who hold it. This is a major achievement, as these teachings are legendary because of their profundity and completeness. As Dūdjom Rinpoché wrote: “Even if you were to actually meet Samantabhadra, I swear that he would not say a single word other than these.” Alan Wallace has made a great contribution in translating these precious teachings, and I am moved by the fact that he is not simply a very experienced translator but also someone who is a deeply conscientious and dedicated practitioner, one who has a knowledge of many Buddhist traditions but has found his home in these extraordinary treasures of the lineage of Dūdjom Lingpa. How wonderful as well that he has translated the brilliant clarifications provided by the great Sera Khandro and Pema Tashi.

The profound teachings in these volumes speak for themselves, and there is no need to elaborate on their contents. But to highlight a few crucial points, I believe that the teachings of Dzokpachenpo need to be approached with great care, reverence, and maturity. First, we need to recognize just how rare, how precious, and how deep they are, as they actually possess the capacity to bring realization and even liberation in one lifetime. As Dūdjom Rinpoché wrote, “Don’t throw away such a precious jewel as this and then look around for semiprecious stones. Now that you have had such great good fortune as to have met this profound teaching, the very heart blood of the ḍākinīs, your mind should be uplifted and you should practice with tremendous inspiration and joy.”

As we can see, Dūdjom Lingpa’s revelations explicitly spell out the qualities we need in order to embrace this path and practice these teachings. They include devotion and pure perception, trust and faith, a keen understanding of impermanence and cause and effect, contentment and disenchantment with mundane distractions, compassion and bodhicitta motivation, honesty and courage, commitment and single-minded enthusiasm, and the ability to see the appearances of this life as dreamlike and integrate the practice into everyday life.

Dūdjom Rinpoché would always encourage students to embrace the *ngöndro* practice, saying how profound and important it is: “A full understanding and realization of the true essence of Dzokpachenpo depends *entirely* on these preliminary practices. In particular it is vital to put all your energy into the

practice of guru yoga, holding on to it as the life and the heart of the practice.” In these remarkable teachings, Dūdjom Lingpa gives direct instructions about how to consider the master as Guru Padmasambhava in person, see him as the nature of our own clear-light rigpa awareness, and through the practice of guru yoga, unite our mind with his wisdom mind. “By merging your mind with his,” he says, “you will experience the nonconceptual primordial consciousness of ultimate reality, and extraordinary realizations will arise in your mindstream.”

And so I encourage you from the bottom of my heart, if you have not already done so, to seek out qualified lamas of this lineage and receive the necessary empowerments, oral transmissions, and instructions for these sacred and profound teachings so that you can put them into practice and proceed along the sublime path of Dzokpachenpo. It is our great good fortune that the New Treasure lineage of Dūdjom Lingpa and Dūdjom Rinpoché thrives today, thanks to the kindness and enlightened vision of their own incarnations, their family lineages, and the masters who hold these precious teachings, allowing them to resound all over the world. The prophecy of the conch shell is playing out before our very eyes.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to pray that this great Nyingma lineage and the tradition of the two extraordinary masters Dūdjom Lingpa and Dūdjom Rinpoché may continue in the future, going from strength to strength, touching countless sentient beings, and awakening them to their own enlightened nature — the indestructible heart essence. May all the visions and aspirations of Dūdjom Lingpa and Dūdjom Rinpoché be accomplished, as fully and as quickly as possible. I believe that these two great masters continue to bless the whole world. Freed from physical form, they abide in the unconditioned timeless splendor of the dharmakāya, benefitting all beings beyond the limitations of time and space, and I know that if we call upon them now with all our hearts, we will find them with us instantly. So I pray that with their blessings the lives of all the great masters may be safe and strong, and that the precious teachings of the Buddha may flourish and spread, to pacify conflict, suffering, and negativity all over the world, to bring peace and tranquility, and to ensure the welfare and happiness of living beings everywhere. And may all of us who are striving to follow and practice the sublime teachings of the clear-light Dzokpachenpo progress in our realization, overcome all obstacles, and finally seize the stronghold of Samantabhadra!

Sogyal Rinpoche

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Preface

HERUKA DÜDJOM LINGPA (1835–1904) was one of the foremost tantric masters of nineteenth-century Tibet. His written works include five visionary texts describing the path to perfect enlightenment from the unexcelled perspective of the Great Perfection, or Dzokchen. This series includes these five seminal texts, along with three essential commentaries by his disciples. They all reveal the same path to realizing the rainbow body in this very lifetime, but each one offers different degrees of detail and highlights different aspects of the path. Dzokchen’s essential terminology and practices are clearly explained while potential misunderstandings and errors are systematically eliminated. Together they constitute a vast wealth of practical guidance and pith instructions concerning the view, meditation, and conduct of Dzokchen, the pinnacle of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. These revered teachings have inspired generations of Tibetans, yet only one has become well known to English speakers, thanks to Richard Barron’s popular translation of *Buddhahood Without Meditation*.¹

These translations were developed and refined over many years. I served as interpreter for Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoché and translated several Dzokchen texts under his guidance beginning in 1990. In 1995, while living with him in the hills above Half Moon Bay, California, I asked whether he would like me to translate any other text. “How about the *Vajra Essence*?” he replied. “Sure!” I said, without knowing anything about these teachings received by Düdjom Lingpa in pure visions (Tib. *dag snang*) of the “Lake-Born Vajra” manifestation of Padmasambhava. Reading the text for the first time, I knew that I had found my heart’s desire: a presentation of the entire path to enlightenment that was coherent, integrated, and richly informative. I was profoundly inspired — I felt that if I were marooned alone on a proverbial desert island with only one book to read, this would be it! Between 1995 and 1998, I translated it under his guidance. Then I served as his interpreter as he explained the text line by line to a hand-picked group of his close disciples, enabling me to correct errors in my translation and clear up points of lingering uncertainty in my comprehension.²

In 1972, Gyatrul Rinpoché was chosen by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness Dündjom Rinpoché, Jikdral Yeshé Dorjé (1904–87), to be the Nyingmapa representative accompanying the first group of Tibetans resettling in Canada. In 1976, Dündjom Rinpoché appointed him as his spiritual representative for America and as director of Pacific Region Yeshe Nyingpo, his network of Dharma centers. For decades Gyatrul Rinpoché has taught students, established Dharma centers, and trained teachers and translators according to traditional methods and with deep understanding of the needs of his Western disciples. Gyatrul Rinpoché received the oral transmission of the *Vajra Essence* three times from three of Dündjom Lingpa's emanations: In Tibet he received it from his root guru, Jamyang Natsok Rangdröl (1904–58), recognized as the enlightened activity emanation of Dündjom Lingpa, and from Dzongter Kunzang Nyima (1904–58), Dündjom Lingpa's enlightened speech emanation and grandson. Later in Nepal he received it from Dündjom Rinpoché, the enlightened mind emanation of Dündjom Lingpa.

In 1998 I served as Rinpoché's interpreter as he gave the oral transmission and his commentary to the *Foolish Dharma of an Idiot Clothed in Mud and Feathers* to a small group of his close disciples. He asked that this be translated and made available to sincere, qualified Dharma students.³ Rinpoché authorized me to teach all the texts he taught me, and several years later I taught the opening section of the *Vajra Essence* to a small group of students in Wales. Between teaching sessions, I began reading the text immediately following the *Vajra Essence* in Dündjom Lingpa's collected works, his *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra*. I had already concluded from the *Vajra Essence* that among the wide range of meditations explained in that text, only four were absolutely indispensable on the Dzokchen path: śamatha, vipaśyanā, cutting through, and direct crossing over. The *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra*, presenting the entire path to enlightenment in one lifetime, focused on just those four practices, which reaffirmed my conclusion from the *Vajra Essence*.

Not long afterward, while teaching the opening section of the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* to a small group of students gathered for a retreat in the high desert of eastern California, I described how I had been deeply moved by my first encounter with this text — the very heart of the *Vajra Essence* presented with great clarity and brevity. A student then asked, “What comes next in that volume?” When I checked, I discovered the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* and its commentary. This is the most quintessential and

concise of Dūdjom Lingpa's visionary texts, summarizing each of the four essential stages of the path with breathtaking clarity. I felt I had no choice but to translate the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* and the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* and its commentary, and with Rinpoché's encouragement I did so.

In the summer of 2005, in Ojai, California, Gyatrul Rinpoché gave the oral transmission and a brief commentary on *Buddhahood Without Meditation*, for which I served as interpreter. With his encouragement I translated the text along with Sera Khandro's commentary, enabled by a generous grant from Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoché, the son of Thinley Norbu Rinpoché and grandson of Dūdjom Rinpoché.

Acknowledgments

The mission of transmitting the authentic Buddhadharma to the modern world has been led by H. H. the Dalai Lama, and the dissemination of the Nyingma tradition in particular was the lifelong work of Dūdjom Lingpa's incarnation His Holiness Dūdjom Rinpoché, who blessed us with his scholarship and wisdom, established Dharma centers, and taught many of today's lamas. The present translations were inspired by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoché, who transmitted and explicated these peerless teachings. Lama Tharchin Rinpoché kindly granted me permission to listen to his oral commentary on the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* given during his 2013 retreat on the practice of cutting through at Pema Osel Ling in California. I gratefully received the oral transmissions of the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* and the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* from Tulku Orgyen Phuntsok.

I have received much help and guidance from many Dharma friends and mentors as I prepared these translations, and I have done my best to render these sacred texts in English. I am deeply grateful to Dion Blundell, who has tirelessly devoted himself with sincere faith and altruism to editing my translations. His assistance has been invaluable. However, flaws in the translation may well remain, and I ask that scholars, translators, and contemplatives who identify any errors bring them to my attention so that they can be corrected in any future editions of these works.

Technical Notes

My goal in translating these sublime treasure teachings has been to render them as accurately and clearly as possible, without omitting or adding anything. In discussing the profound nature of reality, the Great Perfection literature presents significant challenges for the translator. It employs its own special vocabulary in addition to the highly developed general lexicon of Buddhism. Because these are early days in the translating of the Dharma into English, many terms have not yet become standardized. I have noted the Tibetan and Sanskrit equivalents of key terms to assist readers familiar with other translation choices. Many Sanskrit terms that were translated into Tibetan have become well known, and I have used these original terms where their English equivalents are unsettled or awkward: for example, *kāya* instead of “enlightened body” to refer to embodiments of enlightenment.

As a further challenge, it is not uncommon for a single Tibetan term to refer to both the ultimate and the relative natures of its referent — ultimate truth and relative truth — depending on the context. One example is the Tibetan term *rigpa* (*rig pa*, Skt. *vidyā*), which sometimes refers to ordinary awareness, or cognizance. In other contexts it refers to pristine awareness, which is none other than the *primordial consciousness* (Tib. *ye shes*, Skt. *jñāna*) that is transcendently present in the ground of being. The Sanskrit term *jñāna*, in turn, also has ultimate and relative meanings, depending on the context. On the ultimate level, *jñāna* is primordial consciousness, but at the level of relative truth it simply means “knowledge,” as in the two accumulations of merit and knowledge. In Buddhist psychology it simply refers to the basic knowing function of the mind.

Similarly, the Sanskrit term *dhātu* carries multiple meanings, with both ultimate and relative senses. It can mean “space” (Tib. *dbyings*) or “domain” (Tib. *khams*), but more typically in these works it is an abbreviation of *dharmadhātu*, translated as the *absolute space of phenomena*, the ground of being that is inseparable from primordial consciousness. In other cases, however, *dharmadhātu* has a more mundane meaning as the *relative space of awareness*, which is synonymous with “element of phenomena” throughout these translations. This *dharmadhātu* is the range of phenomena that can be perceived by mental consciousness and is one of the eighteen elements (Tib. *khams*, Skt. *dhātu*) commonly cited in Buddhist phenomenology.

Definitions of key terms are embedded throughout these texts as *contextual*

etymologies (Tib. *nges tshig*), which gloss each component of the Tibetan term, unlike the linguistic etymologies commonly found in dictionaries. The term being etymologized is given in a footnote because it manifests in Tibetan only as a sequence of marked components, whose English equivalents are italicized in the text. The results in English may not be as elegant as the Tibetan constructions, but the core vocabulary of Dzokchen is defined succinctly and powerfully, in a variety of ways, throughout our texts.

Tibetan compositions are often endowed with brief or extensive outlines (Tib. *sa bcad*), but they don't always appear explicitly. Topics are simply listed as they come up. Lacking the typographical features English readers expect, a Tibetan text can be very difficult to peruse without first understanding its outline. The *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* may be considered the root text of these revealed teachings not only for its brevity and profundity but also for its outline, consisting of eight progressive *phases* (Tib. *skabs*) in the unsurpassed path of the Great Perfection. Pema Tashi's commentary includes a detailed outline built around these eight phases. But the longer explanations in the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* and the more elaborate *Vajra Essence* have come to us as transcripts with no divisions whatsoever. As an aid to navigation, we have indicated the phase headings of the root text in these two longer texts, where they are implicit. In the *Vajra Essence*, additional headings were suggested by the text itself or taken from *Essence of Clear Meaning*. Furthermore, many of that commentary's key passages clearly derive from the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* and the *Vajra Essence*; such quotations are not cited in the Tibetan, but many have been noted here. Comparisons between the parallel sections and passages in our texts will clarify understanding and drive home the essential points.

Our texts are found in the *Collected Works of the Emanated Great Treasures, the Secret Profound Treasures of Dödjom Lingpa*.⁴ My translations are based on the computer-input edition of that collection published in 2004 by Lama Kuenzang Wangdue of Bhutan, known as Lopon Nikula, who was Dödjom Rinpoché's senior disciple and personal secretary for many years. The colophons of several of our texts show that Dödjom Rinpoché himself edited them for publishing. The process of converting texts from woodblock prints into digital form is critical for the accurate preservation of the vast and profound literature of Tibetan Buddhism. We are fortunate beneficiaries of the many lamas, monks, and laypeople who are engaged in this mission. In particular, Gene Smith, who founded the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center,

established an extensive library of scanned and computer-input editions of Tibetan Buddhist works, making them available online to current and future generations of scholars and practitioners.

Tibetan names and terms are spelled phonetically in the body of the texts, with Wylie transliteration given in parentheses. Sanskrit terms include diacritics to give readers an appreciation for the correct pronunciation of this beautiful language, whose roots are often visible in English. Foreign terms are italicized on first appearance in each volume; most can be found in the glossary. Tibetan readers may consult the source texts via the folio references to Kuenzang Wangdue's edition in square brackets. Source notes, appearing as smaller characters in the original Tibetan, have been included here in parentheses, whereas my own clarifications appear in brackets. Cross-references between our texts are given using the following abbreviations followed by the folio references:

- SV The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra
- CM Essence of Clear Meaning
- MF The Foolish Dharma of an Idiot Clothed in Mud and Feathers
- VS The Enlightened View of Samantabhadra
- BM Buddhahood Without Meditation
- FP The Fine Path to Liberation
- GD Garland for the Delight of the Fortunate
- VE The Vajra Essence

Requirements

These texts clearly reveal the most sublime of all Dharmas — secret mantra, Vajrayāna, or the Vajra Vehicle. The Sanskrit term *vajra* signifies the nature of ultimate reality, with its seven attributes of invulnerability, indestructibility, reality, incorruptibility, stability, unobstructability, and invincibility; and *yāna* means a vehicle for spiritual practice. Such profound instructions are guarded as secrets due to their potential for being dangerously misunderstood and to protect the teachings from disparagement. However, these texts also maintain their own secrecy, as Dūdjom Lingpa states:

Only those who have stored vast collections of merit in many ways, over incalculable eons, will encounter this path. They will have aspired repeatedly

and extensively to reach the state of perfect enlightenment, and they will have previously sought the path through other yānas, establishing propensities to reach this path. No others will encounter it.

Why not? Although people lacking such fortune may be present where this yāna is being explained and heard, because they are under the influence of their negative deeds and the strength of the powerful, devious *māras*⁵ of mental afflictions, their minds will be in a wilderness five hundred *yojanas*⁶ away.

If you wish to put the meaning of these sacred texts into practice, you must seek out a qualified guru to guide you in your understanding and practice. Dūdjom Lingpa continues by stating that you must have “belief in the Dharma and your guru; unwavering trust in the path; earnest mindfulness of death and the conviction that all composite phenomena are impermanent, so that you have little attraction to mundane activities; contentment with respect to food, wealth, and enjoyments; insatiability for the Dharma due to great zeal and determination; and integration of your life and spiritual practice, without complaining.” Rather than merely striving to accumulate virtues that might benefit you in some future lifetime, you should seize this precious opportunity — a human life in which you can practice the sublime Dharma — and generate the aspiration to achieve enlightenment in this present lifetime. He continues:

If you arrive with that aspiration at the gateway of secret mantra — and you have firm faith and belief in it and strong, unflagging enthusiasm — the time has come to practice. . . . Once you have obtained a human life and encountered a guru and the secret-mantra Dharma, if this is not the time to practice the Great Perfection, then there will never be a better time than this in another life — this is certain.⁷

Gyatrul Rinpoché has authorized the publication of these translations with the stipulation that they should be restricted to suitable readers, specifically those who earnestly aspire to achieve liberation and enlightenment. Such people will not be fixated on material success, but due to understanding the first noble truth of suffering, they will have turned away from the allures of saṃsāra. Suitable readers will honor the fundamental Buddhist teachings included in the Śrāvakayāna, and they will revere the Mahāyāna as well, including the cultivation of the four immeasurables, the six perfections, and the insights presented in the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka views. In addition, they will value

all the outer, inner, and secret classes of the tantras and have a genuine desire to practice the cutting through and direct crossing over stages of the Great Perfection. Finally, suitable readers will treat these volumes with reverence and care. This is Gyatrul Rinpoché's sincere request for those interested in *Dudjom Lingpa's Visions of the Great Perfection*.

While those who devote themselves to the practice of these Dzokchen teachings should receive the appropriate empowerments, oral transmissions, and explanations of the lineage masters, the texts themselves do not restrict their readership to those who have completed certain preliminary practices, such as a hundred thousand recitations of the Vajrasattva mantra and so on. So I do not feel that it is appropriate for me as the translator of these texts to impose such restrictions. This is a decision to be made by individual qualified lamas of this lineage. The teachings translated in this series describe in detail the qualities needed on the part of disciples following the path of the Great Perfection, without mentioning empowerments. In fact, the *Vajra Essence* states that ultimately, through the realization of emptiness and pristine awareness, one spontaneously receives all four empowerments:

Establishing saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as great emptiness is the *vase empowerment*. Recognizing precious spontaneous actualization as the self-emergent kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness is the *secret empowerment*. The revelation of pristine awareness, the nonconceptual primordial consciousness of ultimate reality, is the *wisdom empowerment*. Mastering the fruition in yourself is called the *word empowerment*. These are the actual four empowerments, devoid of a bestower and a recipient.⁸

May these translations be of great benefit to all those who study and practice them, resulting in their swift realization of śamatha, vipaśyanā, cutting through, and direct crossing over!

B. Alan Wallace
Santa Barbara, California
April 17, 2015

1. Dudjom Lingpa, *Buddhahood Without Meditation: A Visionary Account Known as Refining One's Perception (Nang-jang)*, trans. Richard Barron and Susanne Fairclough (Junction City, CA: Padma Publishing, 2006).

2. This resulted in the publication of the first edition of the *Vajra Essence* a few years later: Dūdjom Lingpa, *The Vajra Essence: From the Matrix of Pure Appearances and Primordial Consciousness, a Tantra on the Self-Originating Nature of Existence*, trans. B. Alan Wallace (Alameda, CA: Mirror of Wisdom, 2004).
3. This was published as the first text in Dudjom Rinpoche and Dudjom Lingpa, *Sublime Dharma: A Compilation of Two Texts on the Great Perfection*, trans. Chandra Easton and B. Alan Wallace (Ashland, OR: Vimala Publishing, 2012), 17–52.
4. The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (www.tbrc.org) identifies this as W28732.
5. Tib. *bdud*. A demonic force or being that manifests as all kinds of grasping involving hopes and fears.
6. A *yojana* is an ancient Indian measure of a day's range for an ox cart, about five miles.
7. VE 17–18.
8. VE 248–49.

Introduction

You appear in all ways as the glory and protector of disciples,
like the moon and its various reflections in water.
Until the radiant circle of disciples dissolves into absolute space,
the primordial consciousness of absolute space is continuously displayed.
— DÜDJOM LINGPA, SV 622

THE PURE VISIONS revealed by Düdjom Lingpa are streamlined accounts of the core practices of Dzokchen, which appear to transcend all limitations of specific historical eras and cultures. The *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* describes his motivation in recording these exceptional teachings: “Once this ocean of ambrosia had been poured into the fine vase of my mind, I feared that it would be lost, so I sought permission from the *vīras* and *ḍākinīs* to put this into writing, as an inheritance to liberate future holders of the lineage.”

Düdjom Lingpa’s lucid writings and distinguished emanations made major contributions to the spread of Buddhism throughout the world in the twentieth century, and they continue to serve as seminal guides and revered teachers for practitioners in the twenty-first. His previous incarnations included the “boy translator” Drokpen Khyeuchung Lotsawa, one of the twenty-five principal disciples of Padmasambhava, and the master himself predicted that Düdjom Lingpa would emanate in eastern Tibet to tame unruly sentient beings in the coming degenerate times.⁹

In his autobiography Düdjom Lingpa records a visionary dream in which he encountered a god-child by the name of Dungyi Zur Pü, who appeared as “a white man, so handsome you could look at him forever and never be satisfied.” With him was a beautiful girl adorned with jewels, whom he introduced as his sister. They brought Düdjom Lingpa to Wutaishan, China’s Five-Peaked Mountain sacred to Mañjuśrī. Here he was given a white conch to blow in each of the four directions. The conch’s sound roared forth to the west, in contrast to the other directions, signifying that disciples compatible with him lived in cities to the west. In that direction, he was told, his renown would spread, and he would have as many disciples as the rays of the sun.¹⁰

Düdjom Lingpa did indeed liberate many beings in the nomadic wildlands of northeastern Tibet, to the west of Wutaishan, so this is the most obvious interpretation of the prophecy. Nevertheless, Gyatrul Rinpoché suggested that this prophecy may also refer to those of us living today in the cities of the West. These visionary teachings repeatedly state that they were intended for people in the future, and we may consider ourselves included as beneficiaries of Düdjom Lingpa's legacy. With the hope to help fulfill the prophecy and with the permission and blessing of Gyatrul Rinpoché, these translations are offered to those who are dedicated to following the unsurpassed path of Dzokchen.

Concealed Teachings

Tibet in the nineteenth century was fertile ground for a complex array of Buddhist traditions with unique lineages, diverse practices, and highly developed bodies of literature. A thousand years of state and private sponsorship had established powerful monastic institutions and a host of scholars and luminary contemplatives who were deeply revered by the Tibetan people. Learned monks as well as accomplished lay practitioners earned respect for their meditative acumen and were sought out for Dharma instruction. As these traditions and masters devoted themselves to spiritual awakening — still isolated from outside cultures — nineteenth-century Tibet witnessed a renaissance of Buddhist scholarship and practice that reverberates around the world even today.

One of many famous meditation masters who lived in those times, Düdjom Lingpa is known for the clear, incisive teachings he left to humanity. Although he was not educated in the monastic schools that dominated Tibetan Buddhism, he was a spiritual prodigy, experiencing visionary encounters with enlightened beings from an early age. The most important of these was the “Lake-Born Vajra” manifestation of Padmasambhava, the eighth-century Indian guru who helped to establish Buddhism in Tibet. Düdjom Lingpa's transcendent teachers answered his questions, offered advice, made prophecies, and spelled out the meaning of their utterances and other portents. He suffered many hardships in following their repeated instructions to dedicate his life to solitary meditation and peripatetic teaching, while avoiding the worldly shackles of institutional duties, financial security, and the comforts of home. In return, his teachers revealed remarkably profound and clear explanations of the nature of reality and the path to enlightenment, which Düdjom Lingpa recorded in texts such as those

in this series, known as *pure visions* (Tib. *dag snang*).

We might think of Dūdjom Lingpa as a gnostic visionary in modern terms, but his identity in Tibetan Buddhism is as a treasure revealer, or *tertön* (Tib. *gter ston*), one who discovers and reveals Dharma teachings and artifacts that were concealed in earlier times by enlightened beings to benefit future practitioners. Buddhism's dissemination in seventh-century Tibet began with massive state-sponsored initiatives that created the written Tibetan language, translated the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit, built monastic institutions, and trained monks and nuns. The assassination of King Ralpachen in 838 marked the collapse of the Tibetan imperial dynasty and the beginning of a century of fragmentation, conflict, and darkness in the historical record. In the absence of institutional support, many scriptures, practice traditions, and lineages that had been established in the royal period were maintained by householders and yogins. When organized Buddhism reemerged in the eleventh century, there were debates about the authenticity of the early texts and accusations of corruption. New translation (Tib. *gsar ma*) schools emerged, and the earlier texts, traditions, and lineages were retrospectively labeled the early translation, or Nyingma (Tib. *rnying ma*), school.

The Nyingmapas recognize three valid ways for the Buddhist teachings to be transmitted: the oral transmission of the Buddha's words (Tib. *bka' ma*), the concealed treasures (Tib. *gter ma*) originating from Padmasambhava and other masters, and pure vision teachings, such as those in this series. The “long transmission” of canonized scriptures that have been passed down orally from teacher to disciple for many generations includes both the exoteric sūtras and the esoteric tantras. While they enjoy utmost respect, these ancient teachings are sometimes difficult to fathom, except by the most erudite scholars, due to the complexities of translation and the cultural embeddedness of the texts. In contrast, revealed treasures and pure vision teachings are said to carry the “moist breath of the ḍākinīs” as they manifest directly to revealers in more recent times. This “short transmission” of revealed treasures and visionary teachings successively emerges throughout history in accordance with the needs and abilities of suitable disciples from one time and place to the next, so its blessings are said to be more potent. Dūdjom Lingpa's mind incarnation, Dūdjom Rinpoché, reported that when he listened to the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*, all the difficult points of the vast ocean of tantras became clear.¹¹ In his encyclopedic treatise on the Nyingma tradition, he describes treasure teachings as “unequalled in the splendour of their blessings.”¹²

Guru Padmasambhava, known in Tibet as the Second Buddha, or as Guru Rinpoché, and his Tibetan consort Yeshé Tsogyal are primary objects of devotion for today's Nyingmapas, and they were at the heart of Düdjom Lingpa's spiritual world. Anticipating the changing times ahead, they concealed Dharma teachings to be discovered by later incarnations of their disciples over the course of Tibet's evolution and predicted the location and identity of the discoverers of these spiritual time capsules. When these include physical artifacts, such as ritual objects, images, and texts, they are called *earth treasures* (Tib. *sa gter*). They may include symbolic inscriptions that the revealer must decode — often a difficult challenge. Treasures secreted in the mindstreams of Padmasambhava's close disciples, awaiting the optimal time to be disclosed to their hosts, are called *mind treasures* (Tib. *dgongs gter*).¹³ One example is Düdjom Lingpa's *Profound Heart Essence of Saraha*, recently translated into English by Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro, along with its word-for-word commentary by Düdjom Lingpa's disciple Pema Lungtok Gyatso.¹⁴

A pure vision, such as those described in this series, is a teaching received by an accomplished master in a visionary experience or dream as a blessing from a wisdom being such as a deity, siddha, or ḍākinī. Such pure visions are said to originate from the aspirations of bodhisattvas, as Śāntideva aspires in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*: “May all beings unceasingly hear the sound of Dharma from the birds, from every tree, from the rays of light, and from the sky.”¹⁵ Primordial purity is ultimately the nature of everything, as Düdjom Lingpa is told by the original human teacher of the Great Perfection in this historical era, Prahevajra, or Garap Dorjé:

Primordial purity is the supreme encompassing expanse.
From its unveiled natural radiance in pristine clarity

emerges the spontaneously present display
of the treasure trove of enlightenment's wisdoms and qualities.¹⁶

Compared with the other well-known treasure revealers of his day, Dūdjom Lingpa was an outsider. As a child, he was not widely recognized as a reincarnated master, or *tulku*, didn't take ordination, and remained apart from the monastic institutions that dominated Tibetan education at the time. Instead, he endured poverty and hardships in following the advice of his visionary teachers to practice meditation in solitary retreat. At first, because he lacked a formal education and recognition as a tulku, Dūdjom Lingpa's authenticity as a treasure revealer was challenged and his revelations were not taken seriously. Ultimately, however, the truth of his teachings was borne out by his extraordinary efficacy as a spiritual guide, leading hosts of his disciples to high states of Dzokchen realization. It was such empirical evidence that led to his recognition by the leading teachers of his time and to widespread respect for his revelations.

These teachings include vivid accounts of a realized master's innermost experiences and succinct words of heartfelt advice. Their style may seem formal on the surface, but they are woven like sturdy homespun cloth rather than the fancy brocade of classical Tibetan scholarship. The master speaks to readers directly, in everyday language, as a mentor supporting his disciples on the path to enlightenment — without holding anything back. This is not abstract philosophizing but a practical, experience-based guide to each step, obstacle, and accomplishment on the path to realization — from one who has walked this path and led many others to its culmination. Dūdjom Lingpa's teachings are cherished for their clear language and immensely practical instructions on the most profound aspects of the path.

The collection of teachings revealed by Dūdjom Lingpa and his mind emanation Dūdjom Rinpoché is known as the Dūdjom New Treasures (Tib. *gter gsar*), one of the most comprehensive treasure cycles revealed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Dūdjom Lingpa's collected writings and treasure teachings are recorded in twenty-one volumes, and Dūdjom Rinpoché's comprise twenty-five. A detailed description of the process of treasure concealment and discovery entitled *Wonder Ocean* was composed by Dūdjom Lingpa's eldest son, Jikmé Tenpé Nyima, the Third Dodrupchen Rinpoché (1865–1926), who was a consummate Nyingma scholar and adept. This has been translated by Tulku Thondup Rinpoché along with his own commentary and

much documentation of the rich tradition of treasure teachings in Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁷

Spiritual Prodigy

Tibetans love hagiographies of realized masters for their power in inspiring disciples to replicate the guru's accomplishments.¹⁸ Dūdjom Lingpa blessed us with an extraordinary autobiography entitled *A Clear Mirror*, whose highlights are summarized here from the lucid English translation by Chönyi Drolma.¹⁹ She worked from a copy of the author's own manuscript made and double-checked by a disciple of Sera Khandro, regent of Dūdjom Rinpoché, and root lama of his reincarnation as Dūdjom Yangsi Rinpoché. This is Chatral Sangyé Dorjé Rinpoché, who at the age of 102 continues to inspire his many disciples.

Dūdjom Lingpa's autobiography bears little resemblance to narratives of this sort in Western literature. With scant mention of life's ordinary events, it is packed with vivid accounts of the visionary experiences and dreams of a spiritual prodigy whose progress toward enlightenment is driven by life-transforming encounters with deities, siddhas, and ḍākinīs as well as graphic battles with demonic beings. Above all, Guru Rinpoché and Yeshé Tsogyal appear to him repeatedly to validate his realizations, direct his progress, and grant prophecies. Their first appearance in his life story occurs when his previous incarnation, Dūdul Dorjé Rölpa Tsal, passes away and meets them in a pure land, where Guru Rinpoché laments the lack of qualified spiritual mentors to lead beings on the path of the Great Perfection. Yeshé Tsogyal begs him to send an emanation to guide beings in this degenerate age, and Guru Rinpoché answers that Dūdul Dorjé must return to the world to serve beings by the power of his previous aspirations.

Seeing the great difficulties in store, Dūdul Dorjé begs for permission not to return. Guru Rinpoché responds that past lifetimes' aspirations and karma connect him to three thousand fortunate individuals, including more than five hundred who can be liberated in one lifetime, ten treasure revealers, and seven teachers of secret mantra who will reincarnate as his own sons. "Now go!" he commands, promising that wrathful guardians of the teachings will protect him from harm.²⁰

Thus compelled, Dūdjom Lingpa was born as rainbows appeared in the sky on the tenth day of the bird month in the female wood sheep year (1835), in the

Serta valley of Golok in northeastern Tibet.²¹ During the first years of his life, Dūdjom Lingpa witnessed beautiful visions of ḍākinīs and terrifying battles between demons and his wrathful guardians. The year he turned three,²² a profound vision of buddhas and bodhisattvas left the young boy in a faint. Fearing for his life, his mother summoned the local leader Lama Jikmé, who reported that the boy had not been struck by disease: his karmic propensities from previous training had been awakened. Dūdjom Lingpa suddenly recognized Lama Jikmé as the reincarnation of his predecessor Dūdul Dorjé's uncle, and he states that from this time on, the turmoil in his life due to gods and demons vanished.

By the age of six, Dūdjom Lingpa reports that the spectacles of his visionary experiences had blessed him with immeasurable insight and the view of all phenomena as illusory apparitions. Vajravārāhī appeared to him upon a throne of skulls to give practice instructions and a prophesy that his mind treasures would overflow at the age of twenty-two and that he would reveal three cycles of treasures at the age of twenty-four. That same year the Great Compassionate One (Avalokiteśvara) manifested in a dream and promised to accompany Dūdjom Lingpa and dispel his outer and inner obstacles. He reports that from this time until the age of thirty, a warmly affectionate child in white garments accompanied him inseparably in dreams and predicted events in his own and others' lives.²³

At ten, Yeshé Tsogyal appeared and transported Dūdjom Lingpa into the presence of Guru Rinpoché and a great assembly of vīras and ḍākinīs. Guru Rinpoché again warned of the difficulty in guiding the wild and cruel sentient beings of this degenerate era. Then he predicted that Dūdjom Lingpa would reveal profound treasures at the age of twenty-five and blessed him as his supreme son, promising that “you and I will be companions without separation for even an instant, and you can speak with me as any two people would.”²⁴ Then a dream indicated that he would be summoned by his maternal uncle and that he must go to live with him. This came to pass as predicted, but working as a shepherd was not to the boy's liking — he reacted violently. His uncle declared that he must instead learn to read and become a practitioner, so at eleven he was placed under the care of Lama Jamyang, who began teaching him to read, thus fulfilling the prophecy made by a ḍākinī two years earlier. This beloved lama appeared many times in visions to counsel Dūdjom Lingpa in later life. In a dream at twelve, Guru Rinpoché questioned the boy concerning his frightening visions, and he was left in a fearful state, prompting his parents to

summon a lama to perform a cleansing ritual. Like Lama Jikmé before him, this lama saw that Dūdjom Lingpa was not possessed by demons but that his past karmic propensities had been awakened. Such examples show that even though Dūdjom Lingpa says no human teacher introduced him to the view and meditation, he did rely on the kindness of his flesh-and-blood lamas, who understood his spiritual precociousness and removed obstacles in his path.²⁵

Over the succeeding years, Dūdjom Lingpa's visionary teachers instructed him in meditation practice, assessed his view and experiences, and made prophecies that repeatedly came true. He was resolute in following their advice, but he was not always successful in convincing others to heed these prophecies. His uncle scoffed when told he would die unless he engaged in a prescribed practice, and he lived only long enough to regret his unwise response. At sixteen, Yeshé Tsogyal encouraged him to engage in the preliminary practices in reliance on Lama Jikmé. He engaged in a month-long retreat, and in a blissful vision the lama affirmed that he had received the common siddhis. Dūdjom Lingpa states that without searching, he had directly encountered the face of primordial buddhahood abiding within him, and that his awareness arose as the assembly of deities to defeat all obstacles.

At eighteen, falling asleep at the base of a cliff, a ḍākinī appeared and told Dūdjom Lingpa where to find a stone statue of a wrathful deity. Upon awakening, he struck the indicated spot on the cliff with a rock to reveal the statue, which he carried home and showed to his lama and parents. They insisted that he return it to its hiding place, which he did. But in a subsequent dream, another ḍākinī scolded him for having lost such an auspicious opportunity due to following bad advice instead of relying on his own intuition.

Gili Tertön

Dūdjom Lingpa was twenty-one when, as mentioned earlier, he was taken in a dream to Wutaishan and the location of his future disciples was predicted to be in the west. The next year, a beautiful ḍākinī gave him a beryl mirror with thirteen mustard seeds, explaining that he would gather many thousands of students, including thirteen who would accomplish the rainbow body (Tib. 'ja' lus), the culmination of the path of the Great Perfection. Shortly thereafter, a red woman appeared and made several prophecies, concluding with these chiding verses:

In our land of nonhuman ḍākinīs
we use symbols and sing songs —
it's impossible for us to use human speech.
Since you are very foolish,
I have revealed these symbols with human words.²⁶

Then she predicted the arrival of an excellent companion and disciple from Golok and said that Dūdjom Lingpa should accompany him there: Many heart disciples would appear, and he would benefit beings on a vast scale. Gili Wangli did appear as predicted the next year, and he became the main patron of Dūdjom Lingpa, who came to be known as the Gili Tertön.

In a vision at twenty-three, the World Sovereign, Avalokiteśvara, told Dūdjom Lingpa that the time had come for him to help others impartially. He instructed him in the conduct of an authentic treasure revealer:

Those with true aspiration and karmic destiny as treasure revealers
have been born in low situations, poor and humble.
They mostly stay in mountain hermitages, cliffs, and caves.
Some assume the guise of beggars.
Some live as busy householders.
In order to foster humble disciples,
they renounce greatness, keeping to a low station.
To fulfill the necessity of meeting individuals connected to them
by positive aspirations and karma,
they journey throughout every land, wandering without a fixed locale.²⁷

By the age of twenty-five, Dūdjom Lingpa reports that he had gathered disciples and performed practices to help many sick people. He also mentions the difficulties he faced in decoding the symbols of his visionary teachings and transcribing them into words. Then a red ḍākinī informed him of the circumstances that would lead to the discovery of his predicted earth treasure. When he went to the Ba Treasure Cliff of Mar as directed, a piece of rock broke away to reveal a clay statue, an ancient rosary, and a wax container with a roll of paper. This told him to go to a cliff called Silver Buzzard to find his prophetic guide (Tib. *kha byang*) with instructions detailing the treasures he was to reveal. Upon arriving there, a black man astride a horse struck the cliff with his lance,

opening a fissure to reveal another scroll with the prophetic guide.

Following these instructions, Dūdjom Lingpa returned to his homeland and secured a treasure vase to replace the treasures he was to remove. On the specified tenth day of the month, he went with a friend named Dechen to a cliff in Sermé, where he made offerings of tormas and vajra feasts as directed, reporting that the landscape was cloaked in rainbows and appeared to be without any substantial nature. At the base of the cliff, an unseen woman's melodic voice welcomed him and declared that although there were many treasures concealed here, she would give him only half — because he had no consort. He describes climbing a stone stairway to reach the place of concealment, where he struck a fissure in the rock with a chisel. It opened to reveal many treasure caskets. Withdrawing only the seven he was allowed and replacing them with the treasure vase, he climbed back down to where Dechen waited and turned to see that the stairway had vanished. His companions wanted him to quickly transcribe the teachings, but Dūdjom Lingpa says he was required to keep them secret for six years.

In the first month of the year he turned twenty-seven, with the vision of the direct perception of ultimate reality that he describes in the *Vajra Essence*, Dūdjom Lingpa attained the state of a matured vidyādhara, the first of four stages of a vidyādhara. In the last month of that same year, the vision described in the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* took place. In both of these texts, the Primordial Buddha, Samantabhadra, manifesting as the Lake-Born Vajra (Saroruhavajra), one of eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoché, illuminates the path to enlightenment with definitive answers to a broad variety of questions posed by wisdom beings who are his own emanations.

The majestic visions witnessed by Dūdjom Lingpa in the succeeding years document his spiritual progress and his proficiency as a deeply realized gnostic. He reports that by simply focusing on any subject, whatever teachings he needed would flow forth in the space of his awareness as if a precise copy had been made.²⁸ Such a manifestation of a teaching in its entirety is characteristic of pure visions. As Tulku Thondup Rinpoché explains in *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, pure vision teachings are not considered treasure teachings unless they have been “concealed through mind-mandate transmission (Tib. *gtad rgya*) in the essential nature of the minds of disciples and then awakened by pure vision.”²⁹ Having been concealed in the unchanging essential nature of the revealer's mind rather than in physical form, the recollection of a teaching may be catalyzed by a vision or physical object.

Dodrupchen Rinpoché states in *Wonder Ocean* that all treasure revealers have consorts. In order to reveal teachings concealed in the mind's essential nature, "it is also necessary to have the spontaneously arisen bliss which can be produced by a special consort who has made the appropriate aspirations in the past, and who is to become the key to accomplishment."³⁰ Besides having been told that he was able to withdraw only half of the treasures revealed to him for lacking a consort, Düdjom Lingpa received numerous instructions to rely upon consorts, both wisdom beings and worldly *ḍākinīs*, along with predictions of the accomplished sons to issue from his relationships with the worldly ones. He fathered eight sons by three consorts — all eight of whom were recognized as reincarnations of renowned masters.

Despite the profound treasure teachings he revealed and the intense surges of realization and exquisite visions he experienced, Düdjom Lingpa repeatedly lamented to his visionary teachers that he was incapable of teaching. He was promised many accomplished disciples but warned to reject the conduct of false treasure revealers who fabricate teachings and collect payments for religious services. Instead, he was assigned to accomplish specific spiritual practices, often in remote locations. In a retreat at twenty-eight, Düdjom Lingpa received a skull cup of ambrosia from Guru Rinpoché, and "an inconceivable experience of bliss blazed," whereupon he was instructed that his conduct must remain free of pretense: "You should behave as you have in the past — as someone who doesn't 'keep face,' as would a madman."³¹

Later he was cautioned that "just one hundred years from now non-Buddhist barbarian border people will cause not even a murmur of the teachings to endure." For the sake of the few fortunate disciples connected to him, he was told not to exhaust himself by transcribing many lengthy texts but instead to propagate the innermost pith of the teachings. His increasing skill in condensing the loftiest teachings into concise instructions using ordinary language is demonstrated throughout his autobiography and in the texts in this series. Düdjom Lingpa reports overcoming those who challenged the authenticity of his treasure teachings, which an increasing number sought to practice.

Although prohibited by Guru Rinpoché himself from discussing the signs of his spiritual accomplishments with anyone, Düdjom Lingpa consented to describe them at the age of thirty to an inquiring *ḍākinī* — who was nonhuman, so there was no fault. At the conclusion of his description of many signs, she confirmed his realization of cutting through (Tib. *khregs chod*) to the originally pure nature of reality. Then she gave him profound instruction in the swift path

of direct crossing over (Tib. *thod rgal*), and he says that he relied upon this path from that time on. By the following year, his practice was so advanced that he reports a seven-day absorption in the panorama of clear-light appearances that caused his attendants, consorts, and disciples to fear for his life. The truth was revealed in his vision of Vidyādhara Hūṃkara, who confirmed that Dūdjom Lingpa had reached the second stage of direct crossing over, the vision of progress in meditative experience, corresponding to the stage of a vidyādhara with mastery over life.³²

Fearless Conduct

Of the four kinds of enlightened activity — pacifying, enriching, powerful, and wrathful — Heruka Dūdjom Lingpa is best known as a master of wrathful enlightened activity, which is required when obstacles are particularly malevolent. His encounters with demons began in infancy, and his ability to overcome them is indicated in the name Dūdjom, which means “victorious over demons.” In a dream he had at thirty-two, Dūdjom Lingpa met Lama Jamyang, who gave him pith instructions in the practice of severance of *māras* (Tib. *bdud gcod*): the destruction of self-clinging by realizing all gods and demons to be one’s own appearances. Dūdjom Lingpa became renowned for the practice of severance from the perspective of the Great Perfection.

Throughout his life, Dūdjom Lingpa’s battles with demons were won by his fearless practice of severance. He confronted his demons directly and forcefully by recognizing them as phenomena of his own creation, devoid of any inherent existence of their own. In a dream, he meditates on compassion for a fierce demon who stabs him in the heart. When another one slings her breasts over his shoulders and plunges her teeth into his brain, he becomes lucid within the dream — inseparable from his demons and immune from harm.³³

The many vivid and frightening visions Dūdjom Lingpa reports in his autobiography and in our texts may be misinterpreted unless all wrathful and peaceful deities are understood to be devoid of inherent existence. When a *ḍākinī* brings him to Guru Rinpoché’s abode on Copper-Colored Mountain, which is surrounded by innumerable wrathful beings, Dūdjom Lingpa explains that all of them possess peaceful minds of primordial consciousness, which never stray from the absolute space of phenomena, while their manifestations of primordial consciousness bristle with utterly terrifying, fierce, and majestic

attributes.³⁴ Following this magnificent experience of receiving empowerments, teachings, and prophecies from Guru Rinpoché, as Dūdjom Lingpa prepares to go, the view of the Great Perfection is powerfully evoked by the ḍākinī who transported him there: “In the false outlines of this dreamscape’s appearances, there is no such thing as either going or staying.”

Such pointed reminders of the ultimate view appear frequently at the conclusion of Dūdjom Lingpa’s experiences — whenever he errs by investing his visions with true existence. At thirty-four, he was taken in a dream to Amitābha’s pure land of Sukhāvātī, where he expressed his astonishment that this pure land actually existed outside of his own mind. “Ha ha!” chided a ḍākinī, “Something apart from one’s own perception, something that exists independently — I’ve never seen such a thing before, and it’s impossible for me to see such a thing in the future. Even now, your thought that this dreamscape isn’t self-manifest — that is more astonishing!” Reprising the finale of many of Dūdjom Lingpa’s visions, these words woke him from sleep.³⁵

Lineage Guru

By his late thirties, Dūdjom Lingpa’s accomplishments as a teacher and upholder of Guru Rinpoché’s Great Perfection lineage had manifested. When he transcribed the practice cycle for Ḍākinī Trōma,³⁶ a great whirlwind carried his pages in every direction: he saw this as an omen that these practices would be widely disseminated, and indeed they were. Their power is attested in Dūdjom Lingpa’s account of his disciple Pema Tashi. When he transcribed the text, “a stream of milk imbued with flavors, vitality, and nutritive qualities flowed from the sphere of empty space until it just filled a cup. When he drank it, for three days his body and mind were suffused with bliss and new realization was born within him.” Dūdjom Lingpa states that Pema Tashi gained extraordinary realization superior to any other of his disciples and became quite learned.³⁷ He explains this simply: “When a lama with realization and a student suffused with blessings and the utmost fortune of receiving profound instructions meet, even supreme spiritual accomplishment is achieved without difficulty. That’s the nature of such auspicious connections.”

At thirty-seven, Lama Jamyang appeared once more in a dream, asking how Dūdjom Lingpa had come upon his amazing treasure teachings. He explained the discovery of his prophetic guide and earth treasures, saying that the three cycles

of pure vision teachings had arisen in his mind “as if a precise copy had been made there.” Lama Jamyang responded by encouraging him to propagate his teachings: “Given that the Buddhist doctrine will only endure for a short time, its complete potency has come together all at once in your doctrine, so it contains very great blessings, which are swiftly delivered. Individuals who put into practice these teachings will quickly gain liberation without much delay. Have no doubt!”³⁸ These three cycles are known as the “earth revelations of the heart essence of the *ḍākinī*,” the “mind revelations of the welling forth of the expanse of primordial consciousness,” and the “pure vision cycle of the matrix of primordial consciousness,” which is the category of the teachings in this series.

Although he built several houses, Dūdjom Lingpa never stayed in one place for long, repeatedly urged on by portents and the advice of his visionary teachers. He reports hundreds of disciples gathering to receive his teachings on severance and the Great Perfection in various locations. He claims that his wrathful practices were successful in subduing all who opposed him, including even the most recalcitrant sorceress, and he says the signs were witnessed by everyone. His detachment from the monastic system is shown by the single line his autobiography devotes to his construction of Dartsang Kalzang Monastery at fifty-six; this became his seat for the rest of his life.

At fifty-nine, a *ḍākinī* appeared and reminded him that, like all *ḍākinīs*, she was the dynamic expression of his sublime wisdom. She then advised Dūdjom Lingpa to travel quickly to the hidden land of Pemakö, where Guru Rinpoché said that one practice session was equal to one year of practice elsewhere. Here he would discover a prophetic guide and treasures that would be of immense aid to beings. But a few months later, another *ḍākinī* announced that it was too late. Having been unable to reach Pemakö as directed in this life, Dūdjom Lingpa told his disciples to look for his reincarnation there:

Very soon now foreign barbarian armies will begin to flood the Dharma land. Therefore there will be little peace or happiness. With prayers to Padmasambhava, quickly make ready to go to the hidden land of the Guru, Pemakö. I will go there too. In fact this old man will arrive there before you do.

At the age of sixty-nine, on the eighth day of the eleventh month in the water-rabbit year (1903), without any sickness or discomfort, Dūdjom Lingpa passed away with amazing signs. His body was transformed into light, leaving a form

the size of an eight-year-old child, and many five-colored relics were found in the cremation ashes.³⁹

As he promised, he was reborn in Pemakö. When he began speaking it was with a foreign Golok accent. He told everyone that he was Dūdjom Lingpa and repeated the names of his former disciples. His Holiness Dūdjom Rinpoché (1904–87) was three years old when he inexplicably insisted that his parents prepare to receive important visitors. Soon some nomadic monks and nuns approached, and the young tulku ran to greet them, calling the disciples who had come to find him by name and asking what took them so long. They were awestruck and had no doubts about who this was.⁴⁰

Dūdjom Rinpoché was recognized as Dūdjom Lingpa's enlightened mind emanation, and Jamyang Natsok Rangdröl was recognized as his activity emanation. Tulku Drachen was the emanation of his enlightened qualities. His own grandsons Kunzang Nyima (1904–58) and Sönam Deutsen (1910–58) were recognized as his body and speech emanations and were also treasure revealers.⁴¹ According to a description of Dūdjom Lingpa's lineage up to the present time called *Wondrous Golden Grain*, in addition to his eight sons, Dūdjom Lingpa had four daughters, ten grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren.⁴² In patriarchal custom, the sons are given prominence and the daughters are unnamed. Of Dūdjom Lingpa's eight sons, his autobiography mentions the prophecies he received for the first five.

The eldest son, Jikmé Tenpé Nyima, was recognized as the Third Dodrupchen and enthroned at Yarlung Pemakö Tsasum Khandrö Ling Monastery in 1870. At Dzokchen Monastery he received teachings on the *Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (Bodhicaryāvatāra)* from Patrul Rinpoché (1808–87), who was so impressed with the boy that he invited him to Dzagyal Monastery to give the annual teaching of this text before a large audience — at the age of eight. He became an accomplished scholar, and in addition to his text *Wonder Ocean* on treasure revelation discussed above, he composed his first commentary on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* at twenty-one. Realizing that some of his views were not representative of the Nyingma lineage, he composed a second commentary called *Key to the Precious Treasury*.⁴³ His corpus includes ninety-nine works totaling over a thousand pages.⁴⁴

His second son, Choktrul Pema Dorjé (1867–1934), was recognized as an incarnation of Dragyur Marpé Kyeta Choktrul and Dodrupchen Gönpé Tsatsa Tulku Yangsi and was enthroned at Yarlung Pemakö Monastery. He later became the administrator of Dodrupchen Monastery and managed his elder

brother's projects.

Third was Khyentsé Tulku Dzamling Wangyal (1868–1907), who was recognized as the reincarnation of Do Khyentsé Yeshé Dorjé (1800–1866) and was enthroned at both Dodrupchen and Nizok Monasteries at the age of nine. The next year, following a ḍākinī's suggestion, Düdjom Lingpa brought Khyentrul to Patrul Rinpoché, who gave them many transmissions. Khyentrul's son Dzongter Kunzang Nyima was recognized as Düdjom Lingpa's enlightened speech emanation.

Düdjom Lingpa's fourth son, Namtrul Mipam Dorjé (b. 1879), died at an early age.

Fifth came Drimé Özer (1881–1924), who was recognized as a reincarnation of the brilliant Nyingma scholar Longchenpa. Unlike most of his brothers, he did not remain at Dodrupchen Monastery but traveled and taught extensively, following his father's lead. He and his equally famous consort, Sera Khandro (1892–1940), the author of two texts in our second volume, revealed treasures together and worked to preserve the writings and legacy of Düdjom Lingpa. His eighteen-volume corpus was lost in the Chinese invasion of Tibet; the sole work recovered to date is his commentary to his father's Tröma mind treasure, called *Stainless Luminous Expanse*.⁴⁵ His son Sönam Deutsen was recognized as Düdjom Lingpa's enlightened body emanation.

The sixth son, Lhachen Topgyal (1884–1942), an incarnation of Zhichen Apang Kuchen, was enthroned at Taktsé Samdrup Monastery in 1893. He reincarnated as H. H. Sakya Trizin Rinpoché.

Seventh came Tulku Namkha Jikmé (1888–1960), recognized as an incarnation of Patrul Rinpoché. At seven, he was enthroned at Dzagyal Monastery. He revealed nine volumes of treasures and constructed a monastic college.

The eighth son was Dorjé Dradul (1891–1959), recognized as an incarnation of Sangdak Ngönang Namchö Mingyur Dorjé. He succeeded Düdjom Lingpa at Kalzang Monastery.

The Path to Perfect Enlightenment

The path to enlightenment revealed by the Buddha consists of three fundamental trainings: in ethical discipline, samādhi, and wisdom. The foundation of all spiritual practice is ethical discipline — conscientiously avoiding harmful

actions and engaging in beneficial ones. Ethical behavior creates a quality of awareness that is conducive to spiritual development in general and to meditative attainment in particular. Ethical discipline is implicit throughout these texts, for without this solid foundation, the development of *samādhi* and wisdom is impossible.

The higher training in meditative concentration, or *samādhi*, includes a wide array of practices for achieving exceptional mental balance, and a core practice within this training is the cultivation of meditative quiescence (Skt. *śamatha*, Tib. *zhi gnas*). One major outcome of *śamatha* is experiential access to the substrate consciousness (Skt. *ālayavijñāna*, Tib. *kun gzhi rnam shes*), characterized by bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality. Through the achievement of *śamatha*, the body-mind is made supple and marvelously serviceable, preparing one to utilize the distilled clarity and stability of the mind to cultivate contemplative insight (Skt. *vipaśyanā*, Tib. *lhag mthong*), which lies at the heart of the higher training in wisdom. With the union of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*, one is well prepared to achieve a radical, irreversible healing and awakening of the mind through gaining direct insight into the ultimate nature of reality, the emptiness of inherent existence of all phenomena. The unified practice of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* as taught in our texts is an essential aspect of meditation in all Buddhist traditions.

The selections of Dūdjom Lingpa's teachings translated here describe the view, meditation, and conduct of Dzokchen, the Great Perfection. Brought to Tibet from India by Padmasambhava, this is the pinnacle of the nine vehicles for enlightenment transmitted by the Nyingma school. Dzokchen's unique, radically nondual approach subsumes all other vehicles, as our texts demonstrate. The higher training in wisdom is taught in the Dzokchen tradition as the two practices of cutting through to original purity (Tib. *ka dag khregs chod*) and direct crossing over to spontaneous actualization (Tib. *lhun grub thod rgal*). Cutting through is the method for abandoning deeply engrained habits of reification to reveal the original purity of our own pristine awareness, *rigpa*. Direct crossing over is the method for realizing the purity and equality of all phenomena in *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* as displays of the ground *dharmakāya*, while manifesting all the qualities of enlightenment as spontaneously actualized displays of that ground.

The *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*, revealed to Dūdjom Lingpa by Samantabhadra appearing as the Lake-Born Vajra, is considered the root text of the teachings in this series. It further divides the path of this

unsurpassed vehicle into eight sequential phases, beginning with taking the impure mind as the path and concluding with the instructions on how to dwell in the ground of being — having reached enlightenment. The same phases are implicit in the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra*, with more extensive explanations, and in the *Vajra Essence*, which among the five texts in this series offers the most elaborate presentation of the stages of the path to enlightenment. In the tantric literature, it is sometimes said that individuals with sharp faculties may comprehend an entire teaching by fathoming only the root text; those with middling faculties may gain realization on the basis of a somewhat more elaborate presentation, in this case the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra*; and those with dull faculties must study the more detailed tantras, such as the *Vajra Essence*. Finally, the commentaries to the tantras, such as the *Essence of Clear Meaning* and *Garland for the Delight of the Fortunate*, are to be relied upon for further clarification.

The texts in this series point to just four practices as being indispensable (for all but the most gifted adepts) on the Dzokchen path to enlightenment: śamatha, vipaśyanā, cutting through, and direct crossing over, in that order. Our most condensed texts, the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* and the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra*, explain only these four practices, without elaborating on the preliminary practices or the stages of generation and completion. Accomplishing these four practices alone is in principle sufficient to achieve any one of the three levels of rainbow body that signify the culmination of the path of the Great Perfection. In comparison, the *Vajra Essence* presents a more elaborate account of the path to achieving the perfect enlightenment of a buddha, beginning with a brief reference to the four common and seven uncommon preliminary practices, then proceeding through śamatha, vipaśyanā, a wide range of practices in the Vajrayāna stages of generation and completion, and finally the two phases of practice of the Great Perfection.

These texts repeatedly state that to practice the Great Perfection, it is indispensable to achieve śamatha — in which the mind dissolves into the substrate consciousness and you experience bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality — and to realize the emptiness of all phenomena, the goal of vipaśyanā. But the practices of the stages of generation and completion are not indispensable for everyone on this path, as the *Vajra Essence* makes clear. It describes two possibilities for revealing the nature of the ground of being, or the awareness of Samantabhadra, once you have ascertained the view of emptiness. The first way is to directly identify it in your own being:

For the direct identification within your own being, you first establish all the phenomena included in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as emptiness. Once you have ascertained them as the displays of the space of ultimate reality, you identify this state as the great revelation and apprehend your own nature. As a result, you naturally settle in ground pristine awareness as the great freedom from extremes. This is the swift path, the yāna of the Great Perfection.

The second way is for people who lack the fortunate karma leading to direct identification. They can identify the ground in dependence upon the expedient path of the stage of generation followed by the stage of completion:

In reliance upon the relative, effortful path — as a means for leading beings to ultimate, effortless absolute space — the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness of the ground sugatagarbha are generated as signs. And many sādhanas involving visualizations and recitations are taught in accordance with the many accounts of the names and meanings of deities to be revealed, buddhafi elds, palaces, teachers, and retinues. All accounts asserting that by striving in meditative practice you will reach some vast region somewhere else, called a *buddhafi eld*, are called *paths of expedient means*.⁴⁶

A parallel distinction is made throughout Dūdjom Lingpa's Dzokchen teachings and their commentaries: the teachings describe both the signless dharmakāya, which is the ultimate, definitive meaning, as well as conventional, relative meanings that discuss names and objects as if they existed independently. We are continually reminded that such intellectual expediciencies, taught for the sake of our understanding, are not established as existing autonomously.

The vehicle of the Great Perfection takes the result as the path, and the fruition of this path is the recognition of all appearances and mindsets as being empty of inherent existence, manifesting solely as displays of one's own pristine awareness. All phenomena are realized as the radiance of awareness that manifests without obstruction, with nothing to be cultivated, accepted, or rejected. Nevertheless, the profound ultimate truth must not be misconceived as something fundamentally different from conventional, relative truths. Therefore, until we attain the state of fully enlightened buddhahood, we are warned to guard the mind, avoid harmful behavior, and cultivate virtue, in accordance with the infallible law of cause and effect.

In the *Vajra Essence*, the Lake-Born Vajra, Saroruhavajra, asserts that on the

basis of the teachings in this tantra, future disciples will fathom these essential points and all doubts will be vanquished. Likewise, in his commentary to the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*, Pema Tashi interprets Dūdjom Lingpa as saying that in the future many people may achieve liberation in dependence upon this path, which was revealed there in accordance with the minds of disciples of the future. The accessible and enormously inspiring content of these teachings — clearly elucidating each essential step on the path to enlightenment — suggests that the future referred to in these classic treatises is now.

The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra

All the qualities of the view, meditation, and conduct, as well as the ground, path, and fruition, together with taking refuge, bodhicitta, the six perfections, and the maṇḍalas of deities and mantras, are collectively perfected in the sharp vajra.
— DÜDJOM LINGPA, SV 613–14

A masterpiece of profundity and brevity, the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* presents the complete path to perfect enlightenment in a mere 250 lines in the original Tibetan. Composed in crisply elegant verses to facilitate memorization and daily recitation, this tantra is a poetic encapsulation of the Dzokchen view, meditation, and conduct. The “sharp vajra” is discerning wisdom that recognizes all phenomena to be empty of inherent existence, demolishing the mountains of our concepts and collapsing the false shelters we erect out of hope and fear. This consummation of pristine awareness is present in the ground of being, which transcends all extremes of conceptual elaboration and is called the Great Perfection. All spiritual vehicles and fruitions are subsumed within this primordial consciousness that knows reality as it is and perceives the full range of phenomena.

If such a consciousness is primordially present, as the text states, why isn’t everyone enlightened? The Teacher, Samantabhadra appearing as the Lake-Born Vajra, explains to Dūdjom Lingpa how all the worldly appearances and mindsets we take to be real actually manifest like apparitions — reified by our grasping — without even an atom of true existence. But the sharp vajra’s power and blessings bring natural liberation, whereby all phenomena are recognized as spontaneously actualized displays of primordial consciousness. To accomplish this level of realization, we are instructed to focus on the essential points of

practice, clearly distinguished in succinct terms.

The Teacher promises that with the wisdom of experiencing the true nature of existence, devoting ourselves to this pinnacle of paths will swiftly bring blessings, supernormal abilities, and liberation. Even those who do not experience enlightenment in one lifetime will dwell in the splendor of pristine buddhafiels wherein they can perfect their practices. Furthermore, these instructions will allow them to recognize the crucial points during delusive transitional phases, such as dying. But he asserts that those with superior faculties will achieve enlightenment in this lifetime, awakening in the absolute space of ultimate reality, and they will continue to serve others as perfectly omniscient buddhas.

Essence of Clear Meaning

Once you have found delight in the garden of excellent meaning, the melodious explanation of whatever you have understood will hum forth.

Those who taste this sweet essence again and again perfect the power of blessed confidence.

— PEMA TASHI, CM 462

To effectively practice the instructions given in the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*, we must rely upon its detailed commentary, *Essence of Clear Meaning*. Dūdjom Lingpa's disciple Pema Tashi is the first-named requestor of the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* itself. Although he is considered the author of this commentary, his role in modern terms might have been closer to that of a compiler and editor. In the colophon, he describes it as the memorized oral teachings of Dūdjom Lingpa, which he set down in writing. The highly condensed teachings of the root tantra are explained with definitive verses from the sutras, tantras, and famous masters along with Dūdjom Lingpa's oral explanations and quotes from his teachings, especially the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* and the *Vajra Essence*.

In this traditional Tibetan format, called a word-for-word commentary (Tib. *tshig 'grel*), the explanatory material has been woven in between the words of the root text, which are embedded in their original order (in Tibetan). This structure makes the commentary both a comprehensive tutorial and a quick reference tool, because the root text's words serve as an index to the meaning of any passage. In translation, it is not always possible to match the order of the root text within the commentary, but the root terms have been boldfaced, making

it easy to find the explanation for any verse. For example, where the root tantra reads “subtle self-concepts obscure wisdom and primordial consciousness,” the commentary offers this expansion: “In the beginning, **subtle self-concepts** adventitiously arise where there is no self, **obscuring** the essential nature, **wisdom**, **and** its creative power, **primordial consciousness**.”

Furthermore, the commentary is structured in classical Tibetan style with a detailed outline, which elaborates upon the eight-phased structure of the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*. This not only facilitates access to specific subjects, but it offers an in-depth conceptual map of the teachings. The outline does not appear explicitly in the Tibetan text but is defined implicitly by subtopics listed beneath each topic.

Because Dzokchen literature employs a unique vocabulary, and interpreting this profound language is crucial to our understanding, *Essence of Clear Meaning* embeds definitions for many key terms and concepts in the form of succinct explanations called contextual etymologies, as mentioned in the preface. Similar etymologies are found in most of our texts, offering us the opportunity to compare multiple explications of the lexicon of the Great Perfection.

The Foolish Dharma of an Idiot Clothed in Mud and Feathers

I, an old vagabond, have shaken my beggar’s satchel, and this is what came out.
— DÜDJOM LINGPA, MF 465

Speaking now as an old man, Düdjom Lingpa self-deprecatingly describes himself as an idiot and his Dharma as foolish, but as one reads through this extraordinary and very personal presentation of the path, the authenticity of the author and his insights becomes radiantly clear. This brief recounting of the seminal teachings in his life describes the complete path to enlightenment as he traversed it, focusing on the key instructions at each step. In emptying his bag, he holds nothing back.

This story evokes a sense of the powerful presence for which Düdjom Lingpa was famous. His gaze was said to be penetrating and his intellect unmatched; even his most famous son, the Third Dodrupchen, could not defeat him in debate. As he traveled the Tibetan countryside with his retinue of

disciples, the arrival of their encampment must have been eagerly anticipated. The people who assembled to receive his teachings and empowerments would have included many who were illiterate nomads as well as hidden adepts and learned monks and nuns. The opening scene in our story depicts quite a different character from the grandiose scholars with their elegant language and erudition that were also on offer in this vibrant marketplace for spiritual instruction. It's easy to imagine Dūdjom Lingpa's magnetism attracting the faithful with simple, clear instructions that they could easily put into practice in the course of their daily lives.

The colloquial tone of this composition belies its profound content, which narrates the path from the perspective of an accomplished master who holds the unsurpassed view of the Great Perfection. With sharp points and earthy humor, Dūdjom Lingpa punctures each of our misconceptions and belittles each of our excuses, one by one. His grandfatherly advice powers us forward on our journey to enlightenment, bypassing all way stations. Stripped of pretense and transcending intellectual analysis, this Dharma is a flawless mirror that reveals our own primordially enlightened nature.

The Enlightened View of Samantabhadra

Great wisdom is the sole eye of primordial consciousness, for just by opening it, you will truly perceive the nature of existence of ultimate reality, suchness.

— DÜDJOM LINGPA, VS 542–43

Revealed in a visionary experience when Dūdjom Lingpa was twenty-seven, the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* is a visionary teaching manifesting as an extended dialogue between a retinue of bodhisattvas and Samantabhadra appearing as the Lake-Born Vajra. His answers to pointed questions concerning the crucial aspects of Dzokchen practice from disciples who are inseparable from his own nature, such as Vajra of Pristine Awareness, go far beyond a simple, normative account of the path to enlightenment. This portrait of the ultimate spiritual vehicle clearly depicts not only the high road to enlightenment but also the many roadblocks, deviations, and byways practitioners will inevitably encounter — each trap clearly identified, with an escape route and words of encouragement.

Like the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*, the complete path to enlightenment is described here, but key elements of the path are explained in

greater detail. For example, concerning the crucial difference between intellectually understanding emptiness and actually realizing it, the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* simply lists this as a key distinction to be made, and *Essence of Clear Meaning* defines the difference in just two paragraphs. But the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* commits two pages, beginning with a blunt warning: “Those who have not fathomed the depths pretentiously mistake understanding for realization.” It then proceeds to define eight types of mistaken understanding that are not to be confused with realization, followed by a profound description of the phases of actual realization, with pithy guidance at each juncture. Although this text includes no outline, the same phases of the Great Perfection path given in the root text are readily apparent, and they have been identified in the translation to assist readers in comparing this text with the others.

Even though the advice in the *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* is more comprehensive than that found elsewhere in this volume, it may also be more accessible. The everyday language of the dialogue and the heartfelt advice being offered immerse us personally in Dūdjom Lingpa’s vision. The frank explanations of profound subjects and crisp definitions of unique Dzokchen terms dispel mistaken notions and deepen confidence in this pinnacle of the Dharma. We are in the care of an omniscient and supremely compassionate guide who withholds nothing, never minces words, and repeatedly challenges us to accomplish the ultimate goal of enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. There can be no question that this wisdom comes from its primordial source, Samantabhadra.

9. Lama Tharchin Rinpoché, in the foreword to Traktung Dudjom Lingpa, *A Clear Mirror: The Visionary Autobiography of a Tibetan Master*, trans. Chönyi Drolma (Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 2011), x–xi.

10. Dudjom Lingpa, *A Clear Mirror*, 57–59.

11. Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorjé, *A Marvelous Garden of Rare Gems: Biographies of Masters of Awareness in the Dzogchen Lineage*, trans. Richard Barron (Chökyi Nyima) (Junction City, CA: Padma Publishing, 2005), 284.

12. Dudjom Rinpoche Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals & History*, trans. and eds. Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991), vol. 1, 745.

13. B. Alan Wallace, “The Dialectic Between Religious Belief and Contemplative Knowledge in Tibetan Buddhism,” in *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*, eds. John Makransky and Roger Jackson (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2000), 203–14.

14. Dudjom Lingpa and Pema Lungtok Gyatso, *Dudjom Lingpa's Chöd and An Ambrosia Ocean of Sublime Explanations*, trans. Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro (Ashland, OR: Light of Berotsana, 2014).
15. Śāntideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, trans. Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1997), 142.
16. Dudjom Lingpa, *A Clear Mirror*, 96.
17. Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet: An Explanation of the Terma Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Harold Talbott (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997).
18. Dūdjom Rinpoché includes short biographies of the most important treasure revealers in *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, 743–881. See also Tulku Thondup, *Masters of Meditation and Miracles: Lives of the Great Buddhist Masters of India and Tibet*, ed. Harold Talbott (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1996); Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal, *Light of Fearless Indestructible Wisdom: The Life and Legacy of H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2008); Sarah Harding, trans., *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa*, foreword by Gangteng Rinpoché (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2003); Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
19. Cited in note 9 above.
20. Dudjom Lingpa, *A Clear Mirror*, 7–10, 208–9.
21. Dūdjom Lingpa is identified by TBRC as P705.
22. Tibetans count a child one year old at birth, hence Dūdjom Lingpa was two by Western convention; I have retained the Tibetan ages here.
23. Dudjom Lingpa, *A Clear Mirror*, 186.
24. *Ibid.*, 219–21.
25. *Ibid.*, 138.
26. *Ibid.*, 61.
27. *Ibid.*, 263–64.
28. *Ibid.*, 74.
29. Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, 61.
30. *Ibid.*, 107.
31. Dudjom Lingpa, *A Clear Mirror*, 80.
32. *Ibid.*, 97.
33. *Ibid.*, 111.
34. *Ibid.*, 103.
35. *Ibid.*, 120.
36. This is translated in part 4 of Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro, trans., *The Sole Essence of Clear Light: Tröma Tögal Practice, The Terma Revelations of Heruka Dudjom Lingpa and Commentary by One of His Foremost Disciples, Tülku Drimed Ödzer* (Boulder: Kama Terma Publications, 2011).
37. Dudjom Lingpa, *A Clear Mirror*, 133.
38. *Ibid.*, 131.
39. Tsewang Dongyal, *Light of Fearless Indestructible Wisdom*, 53.

40. Ibid., 74.

41. Holley Gayley, “The Scions of Dudjom Lingpa,” TBRC blog post on January 21, 2010.

42. Holley Gayley, “Who’s Who in the Dudjom Lineage,” TBRC blog post on September 23, 2011, based on the work of Padma ’od gsal mtha’ yas called *Ngo mtshar gser gyi snye ma* (Wondrous Golden Grain) in *Deb chung a ru ra’i dga’ tshal* (2003).

43. Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpa’i Nyima, *Key to the Precious Treasury: A Concise Commentary on the General Meaning of the Glorious Secret Essence Tantra*, trans. Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro (Boston: Snow Lion Publications, 2010).

44. Tarthang Tulku, *Masters of the Nyingma Lineage* (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1995), 361.

45. This is translated in part 2 of Chönam and Khandro, *Sole Essence of Clear Light*. See page 14, note 36.

46. VE 182–84.

The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra

From the Matrix of Pure Appearances and Primordial Consciousness, the
Quintessence of the Great Mystery of the Mantra[yāna], the Primordially Pure
Absolute Space of Samantabhadrī, the Spontaneously Actualized Treasury of the
Great Perfection

by
Düdjom Lingpa



Dedication [610]

To the supreme Omnipresent Lord of all the buddha families and maṇḍalas —
to the sugatagarbha — I bow with unwavering faith.

In the equality of saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path,
the pervasive emptiness of pristine space,
I, the great yogin of the dharmakāya, free of conceptual elaboration, arose as an
apparitional display of primordial consciousness.

The ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha,
free of conceptual elaboration and imbued with the three doors of liberation, is
primordially enlightened.
As spontaneously actualized displays of the union of the three kāyas in absolute
space, the teacher and his circle of disciples appeared, their minds
indivisible.

This arose as the splendor of my fine karma, prayers, and merit and that of some
individuals with fortune equal to my own. [611]
Those people who lack the karmic momentum of this path
will get no more from this than from a drawing of food and wealth.
This space treasury of ultimate reality is granted as an inheritance to people of
good fortune.

Phase 1: Taking the Impure Mind as the Path For the satisfaction of the
apparitional display of his circle of disciples, the supreme teacher,
Samantabhadra, Omnipresent Lord Vajra,
declared, “Listen!” to his circle of disciples, who were the nondual display of his
own creative power.

Examine the body, speech, and mind, and among them recognize the one that is
primary as the all-creating sovereign.
The shape and color of the all-creating sovereign,
as well as its origin, location, and destination, are objectless openness. [612]
This is the spontaneous actualization of the essential nature of the path of cutting
through.

Simultaneous individuals enter the path with no basis and no root.
Others should come to rest in space,
and within three weeks they will certainly awaken and enter the path.
Those of the class with inferior faculties
identify stillness and movement,
and by taking the mind as the path, they are led to the absolute space of pristine
awareness.

First is single-pointed unification of the two.
Then by resting without observing, its natural power manifests.
Abide loosely without mindfulness in a vacuous, wide-open clarity.
And resting in a luminous vacuity is called self-illuminating mindfulness.

For everyone the various experiences of bliss, vacuity, and luminosity become
objects of craving and attachment;
and meditative experiences of illnesses and discomfort in the body, speech, and
mind sporadically arise over time.

Whenever you proudly hope for good things and cling to them,
and fear bad things and reify inflictors of harm,
you have stumbled upon a dangerous juncture that can lead you astray.
The general synthesis that is the sole, vital point of the path is ascertaining all
experiences of pleasure, pain, and indifference as false impressions of unreal
meditative experiences. [613]
By releasing them, without blocking or embracing them,
you bring an end to deviations and losses, and this is the one eye of wisdom.

Those who have become distant from sublime spiritual mentors
should cherish the five topics as the sublimity of the path.
If you strive too hard in practicing single-pointedness,
the power of your mind will decline; and with stagnant mindfulness, although
your body is human, your mind becomes that of an animal.
Some people may stray into delirium;
so devote yourself to a spiritual mentor, without ever being separated from him.

In short, even if you strive diligently in this phase of these practices for a long
time, taking the mind as the path
does not bring you even a hair's breadth closer to the paths of liberation and

omniscience,
and your life will certainly have been spent in vain!
So understand this, you fortunate people.

Phase 2: Revealing Your Own Face as the Sharp Vajra of Vipāśyanā

With the manifestation of the sharp vajra of wisdom,
pristine awareness transcends the ethically neutral ground.
Being nothing whatsoever, [the essential nature] transcends all expressions of
speech and thought.

In natural openness, with no modification, negation, or affirmation by
meditation, it is spontaneously actualized as the sharp vajra of wisdom.
All the qualities of the view, meditation, and conduct, as well as the ground,
path, and fruition, [614]
together with taking refuge, bodhicitta, the six perfections, and the maṇḍalas of
deities and mantras, are collectively perfected in the sharp vajra.

Sentient beings under the domination of the māras of ignorance and mental
afflictions are distinguished from the very instant
they experience the perfect enlightenment of omniscience,
and they become fields of merit for sentient beings, including gods.

Phase 3: Revealing the Ground Dharmakāya

The sharp vajra of discerning wisdom
demolishes the mountain of saṃsāra of self-concepts.
Investigate the origin, location, and destination of the name and referent of that
which is grasped as the “I,” which is the root of saṃsāra.
Decisively recognizing it as objectless emptiness
is determining personal identitylessness.

Seek the bases of designation of the names of the self and of objects, and
decisively recognize them as objectless emptiness.
Investigate how all things, starting with partless elementary particles, are empty
in the sense of being devoid of inherent nature.
Then decisively recognize objectless emptiness in the absolute space of
phenomena in the worlds of appearances of this life, the hereafter, and
dreams.
Decisively understand that the karmic relationships of virtue and vice, as well as
the benefit and harm from gods and demons, are of the nature of objectless

openness.

Cut through the basis and root of the origin, location, and destination of the buddhas and displays of buddhafi elds, [615]
and of the appearances, mindsets, and objects of the three realms of saṃsāra.
Truly recognize everything as being of the nature of objectless emptiness,
without giving this mere lip service.
The space of great emptiness acts as the ground of appearances of saṃsāra.

Decisively establish that space is the ground
of all phenomena in the panoramic sweep of objectless space.
Pristine space is the buddha,
the ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha.

Therefore, realize all phenomena as emptiness.
The experience of the conscious awareness of identitylessness is the sharp vajra
itself, which is the consummation of pristine awareness that is present in the
ground.

Finally, in order to collapse the cave of fixations on hopes and fears, visualize
your body, speech, and mind as the three vajras,
and with the vital points of the pith instructions on the three great principles,
rove about in haunted places
and make the supreme offering of your cherished body.
By the power of this, the false cave of hopes and fears will collapse.

Phase 4: Determining the Characteristics and Qualities of the Ground The
essential nature of the whole world of appearances is emptiness.
Great emptiness is spontaneously actualized as the essential nature of the path.
The essential nature of the dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha, [616]
is not modified or altered by either saṃsāra or nirvāṇa.
Free of the extremes of conceptual elaboration, it is imbued with the three doors
of liberation.

It is spontaneously actualized as the five kāyas,
the five buddha families, the five facets of primordial consciousness, the five
buddhafi elds, the five male deities, the five female consorts, the Three
Jewels, the Three Roots, the classes, maṇḍalas, empowerments, and
worship, as the essential nature of mahāyoga.

ཀུན་གྱི་ཡོང་ལུ་འཕྲུག་པའི་ཆེན་པོ་ལྟ་བུ་གྱི་མཆོག་ལོ།

the five displays inside the body,
the purification, transmutation, igniting, and descent of the channels, vital
energies, and bindus, together with the empowerments and four blisses, are
all

spontaneously actualized emanations of the sugatagarbha.

In short, the dharmakāya, absolute space devoid of signs,
is bound with names, modes, and signs in accordance with the ways of saṃsāra.

In order to guide disciples who grasp at permanence

and to counteract six kinds of craving,

visualizing, purity, and emptiness serve as remedies.

Therefore, those relative, artificial Dharmas of all the yānas are emanated from
and reabsorbed into the sugatagarbha,

like rivers that emerge from and return to the ocean.

So it is known as the ground Great Perfection.

Regarding tīrthikas, who seek a path while clinging to the extremes of eternalism
and nihilism; those who [wander] in saṃsāra by deluding their mindstreams
with clinging to and reifying appearances and the mind; śrāvakas, who take
personal identitylessness as the path; [617]

pratyekabuddhas, whose path apprehends emptiness and the links of dependent
origination in forward and reverse order; Cittamātrins, who view the world
of appearances as the mind;

Mādhyamikas, who apprehend all phenomena as empty;

followers of kriyā, who primarily emphasize hygiene and cling to realms;

followers of upāya, who integrate the higher and lower views and conduct;

followers of yoga, who regard the samayasattva and jñānasattva as
autonomously different; followers of mahāyoga, who mistakenly view
objects as autonomously real; and the path of anuyoga, in which there is the
pretense of actualizing the cause and fruition of absolute space and
primordial consciousness — all the grounds, paths, meditative experiences,
and realizations of those [yānas]

are spontaneously actualized facets of the Great Perfection.

Like regarding water taken from the ocean as the entire ocean, all yānas are seen
as deficient by those who realize the meaning of this.

In the absolute space of pristine awareness, which is actualized by wisdom and
primordial consciousness, the Buddha Samantabhadra, who is free of
relinquishment and attainment, is the Great Perfection — the essential nature
of saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path.

Therefore, this is renowned as the path Great Perfection.
All the causal yānas that have the pretense of being the ground of the fruition are
actualized as the sugatagarbha, Samantabhadra.
Appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra are naturally liberated, without
abandoning them, as kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness — this is
the authentic teaching of all the jinas.
All pretentious claims regarding other fruitions are wearisome.
Therefore, all this is the fruition of all Dharmas —
the spontaneous actualization of the fruitional Great Perfection.
Without falling to the extremes of mundane existence or peace, [618]
the creative power of primordial consciousness that knows [reality as it is] and
perceives [the full range of phenomena] blazes forth.
Although the genesis of names is not different,
for the sake of disciples, it is given conventional names.

Phase 5: Determining Secret Dualistic Grasping and Revealing the Way of Natural Liberation Thus, as for the emergence of impure appearances and
mindsets of saṃsāra, from the displays of great original purity,
subtle self-concepts obscure wisdom and primordial consciousness, and due to
the subsiding of the inner glow and radiance of the ground into the womb,
the luminosity of its outer radiance, the ethically neutral substrate of
saṃsāra, manifests from immaterial space,
and the consciousness of grasping at the “I” serves as the basis from which
appearances and mindsets emerge.
With mentation alone established as the basis from which appearances arise,
from the movements of the six kinds of conditioned consciousness manifest
indeterminate phenomena, like hallucinations.
Sporadically, like hair-tips moved by the wind,
due to the five energies that emanate, vacillate, differentiate, assemble, and
transform, the impure eon is created, abides, and is destroyed and emptied.
The five sensory consciousnesses give rise to apprehended objects, which are
apprehended by the roving thoughts of subtle mental consciousness.
In one day, countless subtle eons vanish.
Completely withdrawing into the domain of mentation, daytime appearances
arise, [619]
and with their complete withdrawal into the domain of the substrate, nighttime
appearances arise.
When you fall asleep an eon dissolves into the space of awareness

When you fall asleep, an eye dissolves into the space of awareness.

The substrate spontaneously actualizes the formless realm;
afflictive mentation, the form realm;
and mentation, the desire realm.

Not even an atom of the three realms possibly exists out there.

The rūdra of the view of self is the matraṃkaḥ of saṃsāra,
your body is the desire realm, your speech is the form realm, and your mind
abides as the four dimensions of the formless realm.

Flesh, blood, warmth, breath, the white and red bindus, the space of awareness,
the four elements, the sun, moon, and Rāhula are [thus] established.

Liberated by the power and blessings of the sharp vajra
of conscious awareness of identitylessness in pure absolute space, the
quintessences manifest as the kāyas and facets of great primordial
consciousness.

Without abandoning saṃsāra, you are liberated as a buddha.

Without abandoning the view of the self, it is pacified as a display of
spontaneous actualization.

Phase 6: Teachings on the Essential Points of Practice and Their Key

Distinctions Having established as your witness the ground of being, absolute
space, as the true buddha, by generating the power of pure prayers,
make a commitment to omniscient buddhahood.

At all times supremely cherish the practice of the essential points of the pith
instructions [620]

on practicing for death and on immersion and withdrawal.

The manifestation of the substrate as absolute space is the dharmakāya,
Samantabhadra.

The manifestation of the absolute space of mental consciousness is great
wisdom.

The manifestation of the ultimate nature of the mind is the supreme path of
pristine awareness.

The manifestation of conditioned consciousness blazes forth as the creative
power of primordial consciousness.

The manifestation of the essential nature of sentient beings is buddhahood itself.

The extinction of impure appearances and mindsets is actual liberation.

When understanding arrives at the ultimate nature, realization is certain.

After making such distinctions, so that you are not confused regarding the
essential points, it is supremely important to focus your practice on these

essential points.

Thus, with the wisdom of truly realizing the nature of being of the Great Perfection through actualizing the nature of existence, focus on unifying your view, meditation, and conduct.

Phase 7: How to Follow the Path of the Great Clear Light, Direct Crossing Over Liberation is swiftly achieved by devoting yourself to the pinnacle of paths, the swift path, the essential Dharma, filled with blessings of clairvoyance, extrasensory perception, and miraculous power, the path of direct crossing over to the city of the great transference. These are practical instructions on forcefully transferring the residual appearances of the emergence of objects to the initial consciousness to the space of awareness of the quintessences. [621]

The initial consciousness emerges as a vision of the clear light, manifesting as a sight for the eye of wisdom.

Visions emerge and progress as the great clear light.

Take satisfaction in the mudrā of pristine awareness ripening as the vital essence.

With the extinction of appearances and mindsets, you cross over into the absolute space of ultimate reality, and you awaken as the great transference youthful vase kāya.

The signs of this, like space dissolving into space, are that there are no limits to your lifespan, duration, and dimensions, and three kinds of liberation occur as the quintessence of the rainbow body.

Due to various, indeterminate good and bad visionary experiences, joys and sorrows arise over the course of time.

Without hope or fear, transfer them all into absolute space.

Individuals who do not reach the culmination of the path like that realize the vital points of the view and meditation, like a swallow entering its nest; identify the transitional phase of dying, like a lovely young woman gazing at her reflection; recognize the nature of existence, like meeting someone you have known before; merge the clear light into absolute space, like a child crawling onto its mother's lap; practice continuously, like repairing a broken irrigation canal; block the entrance to the womb, like being released from a foul prison; and so on.

Recognize the supreme importance of these six analogies and their vital points. [622]

By this it is possible that you will be liberated or find relief.

Phase 8: How to Dwell in the Ground of Being Ultimately, in the fruition of liberation,

the ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha,

is spontaneously actualized as the dharmakāya, the primordial protector.

That which is to be achieved is the youthful vase kāya.

Those of superior faculties actualize this in one lifetime;

those of middling and inferior faculties find pristine relief in the splendor of the
kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness and dwell in the grounds of the
five buddhafiels.

You appear in all ways as the glory and protector of disciples, like the moon and
its various reflections in water.

Until the radiant circle of disciples dissolves into absolute space, the primordial
consciousness of absolute space is continuously displayed.

This visionary experience arose as an illusory display of the primordial
consciousness of Traktung Dūdjom Pawo. After some time it was earnestly
requested by the hermetic disciples Pema Tashi, Orgyen Dorjé, Rikpé Nyugu,
and Lodrö Wangpo. Since this was meaningful, may the virtue that results from
it dredge the three realms of saṃsāra from their depths.

Virtue, virtue, virtue — sarva maṅgalam!

Essence of Clear Meaning



A Short Commentary on the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*

by

Pema Tashi



[340] From the crown of my head I beseech the Dharma king, the great treasure revealer, the regent of Padmasambhava,⁴⁷ who truly sees the meaning of the Great Perfection of unmodified conscious awareness and is skilled in disseminating it to others: May I never be separated from you until I reach great enlightenment!

THIS [TREATISE] is a uniquely marvelous sign that the time is ripe for meditative experiences and realizations due to the training of many previous generations in the unsurpassed Early Translation school, the Nyingma tradition, which is the essential Dharma of the swift path to buddhahood in one lifetime.

Here I shall present to the best of my ability a concise commentary on the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*, a synthesis of the quintessence of the great mystery of the Mantra[yāna], [341] which correctly reveals the nature of cutting through to original purity and the path of direct crossing over to spontaneous actualization. This includes three sections: (I) the meaning of the title, (II) the meaning of the text, and (III) the colophon.

I. The Meaning of the Title

This section has four parts: (A) the title, (B) the explanation of the meaning of the title, (C) how the title was chosen, and (D) the reason for that choice.

A. The Title

**Here is presented the Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra:
From the Matrix of Pure Appearances and Primordial Consciousness,
the Quintessence of the Great Mystery of the Mantra[yāna],
the Primordially Pure Absolute Space of Samantabhadrī,
the Spontaneously Actualized Treasury of the Great Perfection**

B. The Explanation of the Meaning of the Title

This section has two parts: (1) the basis from which it arises and (2) the title of the Dharma that arises from it.

1. The Basis from Which It Arises

By the power of familiarization with the profound path of the stages of generation and completion, however objects appear, they all arise solely as **pure appearances**. [342] When it fully expands, the creative power of the subject that apprehends these appearances — the **primordial consciousness** that knows reality as it is and perceives the full range of phenomena — becomes the means for achieving the supreme and common siddhis.⁴⁸ Since entrances to the path of skillful means and wisdom limitlessly arise from it, it is said to be **from the matrix**. The meaning of *matrix* is that it connects many things. In short, all the collections of Dharmas that emerge from the creative power of the wisdom that arises from meditation are called *the matrix of pure appearances and primordial consciousness*.

2. The Title of the Dharma That Arises from It

When the nature of existence is apprehended within itself, it transcends words and concepts, so the presentation of the bodhisattva grounds and paths and so on cannot be applied to it. [343] However, in dependence upon the way it appears to disciples, the conventions of the ground, path, and fruition are used. In accordance with that, the union of the **primordially pure** essential nature of ultimate reality, the pristinely pure **absolute space**⁴⁹ of **Samantabhadrī**, which is immutable throughout the three times, with the **spontaneously actualized** clear light totally encompasses all the phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, without blending them together. Therefore this is the **Great Perfection**. Since it is the basis from which all the qualities of the paths and fruition emerge, it is like a **treasury**, and this is the tantra of the ground. The subject that arises in accordance with the object, the absolute space of phenomena, [344] is your own self-aware primordial **consciousness**, or pristine **awareness**, and this is the tantra of the authentic path. The manifestation of its symbols in the form of names, words, and letters is that which designates the tantra of the path.

Its three divisions include tantras that manifest as sounds,⁵⁰ tantras that are uttered as sounds,⁵¹ and symbolic tantras.⁵² Their essential nature is wisdom, and they are imbued with the seven vajra qualities.⁵³ Due to familiarization with realization, reified appearances, together with their habitual propensities, are pierced and demolished, so it is called **the Sharp Vajra**. **Tantra** has the meaning of constant presence, without interruption, so it is said that *tantra* refers to a continuum. Moreover, the tantra of the ground, the

sugatagarbha, is constantly present from the time of being a sentient being up to buddhahood. The *Sublime Continuum (Uttaratantra)* states, “It is immutable ultimate reality, which will be in the future as it was in the past.”⁵⁴

Its two divisions include the ground as the essence of the nature of existence and the delusive, imputed ground. This [tantra] reveals the former explicitly and the latter implicitly. The path unites the ground and the fruition, so it is a tantra. As for its classification, between skillful means and liberation, it is the latter. The path dispels adventitious obscurations, and it manifests the essential nature of indivisibility of the ground and the fruition, so it is the fruitional path. Its two divisions include the *dharmakāya* for your own sake [345] and the *rūpakāya* for the sake of others. This dharma synthesizes the **quintessence** of the definitive sūtras and collections of tantras that constitute the **great mystery of the Mantra[yāna]**. It is said that it **is presented here**, for this is the case.

C. How the Title Was Chosen

In general, among the many ways of designating a title, in this case the title was chosen in reference to the meaning.

D. The Reason for That Choice

This is obvious.

II. The Meaning of the Text

This section has two parts: (A) the homage as a branch of the text as a whole and (B) the actual explanation of the meaning of the tantra.

A. The Homage as a Branch of the Text as a Whole

**To the supreme Omnipresent Lord of all the buddha families and
maṇḍalas —
to the sugatagarbha — I bow with unwavering faith.**

The sugatagarbha is the basis of emanation of all the **buddha families**, for it is the nature of the enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities of all the *jinas* of the three times. While ultimate reality is one, for the sake of disciples it merely appears as distinct manifestations, so it is the **Omnipresent**

Lord of all the maṇḍalas of peaceful, enriching, powerful, and wrathful deities. Because it appears as the progenitor of all the buddhas, it is even more **supreme** than the buddhas. To sustain the stream of nonmeditation in which your own face manifests as the unique revealer of the Great Perfection — the primordial protector Samantabhadra, pristine awareness, **the sugatagarbha** — is to **bow with unwavering faith**. [346] The realization of subject and object as nondual is the homage of encountering the ultimate view. The purpose of the homage is that by perfecting the accumulations, obstacles will be pacified, the treatise will be completed, your wisdom will be perfected, and you will realize yourself as sublime.

B. The Actual Explanation of the Meaning of the Tantra

This section has three parts: (1) the account of the cause that gave rise to the tantra, (2) the discussion of the contributing conditions, and (3) the resultant comprehension of the actual meaning of the tantra.

1. The Account of the Cause That Gave Rise to the Tantra

This section has four parts: (a) how the appearances of phenomena dissolved into the absolute space of phenomena, (b) how the nature of existence of ultimate reality manifested, (c) how spontaneously actualized appearances arose as the teacher and his circle of disciples, and (d) the addendum of the qualities of disciples.

a. How the Appearances of Phenomena Dissolved into the Absolute Space of Phenomena

**In the equality of saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path,
the pervasive emptiness of pristine space,**

**I, the great yogin of the dharmakāya, free of conceptual elaboration,
arose as an apparitional display of primordial consciousness.**

Due to the power of sublime qualities acquired over many lifetimes, all phenomena included among **saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path**, as they delusively appear to ignorance, subsided into the **equality** of the originally pure primordial ground, absolute space, the **pervasive emptiness of pristine space**.

After some time, I limitlessly pervaded that mode of existence, and I directly fathomed its essential nature by taking as the path the ultimate meaning of cutting through to original purity.

b. How the Nature of Existence of Ultimate Reality Manifested

When **I, the great yogin**, as the original Buddha Samantabhadra, [347] or **the dharmakāya, free of conceptual elaboration**, emerged as an appearance from that ground, without deludedly succumbing to appearances as other, I recognized ultimate reality as my own great face. Consequently, I took as the path the appearances of the radiance of pristine awareness and directly perceived the ultimate path of direct crossing over to spontaneous actualization. In the one **primordial consciousness** of the essential nature of great purity there **arose an apparitional display** of a buddhafield, the teacher, and his vast circle of disciples. Here is how they appeared.

c. How Spontaneously Actualized Appearances Arose as the Teacher and His Circle of Disciples

The ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha, free of conceptual elaboration and imbued with the three doors of liberation, is primordially enlightened.

As spontaneously actualized displays of the union of the three kāyas in absolute space,

the teacher and his circle of disciples appeared, their minds indivisible.

Because the original **ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha**, is **free of the eight extremes of conceptual elaboration**⁵⁵ and is **imbued with the three doors of liberation**,⁵⁶ it is **primordially enlightened**. It is enlightened as the progenitor of all the buddhas, and its unimpeded, **spontaneously actualized**, natural radiance is the *saṃbhogakāya* Samantabhadra, the Lake-Born Vajra [Padmasambhava]. Its creative **displays** variously appeared as *nirmāṇakāyas*, including the Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness. **In the absolute space of the union of the three kāyas, the teacher and his circle of disciples appeared as displays whose minds were indivisible.** In dependence upon their appearance,

I easily apprehended and fathomed this profound Dharma. Wherever the teacher and his circle of disciples assemble, [348] the meaning of the tantra certainly emerges. So to classify this discourse in terms of common and uncommon teachings, it is the latter.

d. The Addendum of the Qualities of Disciples

This arose as the splendor of my fine karma, prayers, and merit and that of some individuals with fortune equal to my own. Those people who lack the karmic momentum of this path will get no more from this than from a drawing of food and wealth. This space treasury of ultimate reality is granted as an inheritance to people of good fortune.

This sublime entrance to the nonconceptual primordial consciousness of the minds of all the jinas of the three times **arose as the splendor of the fine karma, prayers, and merit** acquired over the course of many previous lifetimes by me, a *vidyādhara*, **and that of some other individuals with fortune equal to my own. Those people who lack the karmic momentum of having followed this path** will either not encounter this path, or if they do, they will not be attracted to it. Even if they are slightly drawn to it and they apply themselves to teaching and listening, due to their poor wisdom and faltering enthusiasm, they **will get no more from this than** if they had encountered **a drawing of food and wealth**. If they memorize it, they will not retain the words; if they ponder it, they will fail to understand it; and if they meditate, it will not arise in their mindstreams.

Therefore, **this inexhaustible space treasury of ultimate reality is granted as an inheritance** or bestowed by the self-emergent Padmasambhava **to people of good fortune** endowed with faith, enthusiasm, and wisdom. He implied with this statement that in the future it is possible that many people will achieve liberation in dependence upon this path. [349]

47. This refers to Dūdjom Lingpa, who is Pema Tashi's root guru.

48. See *siddhis*, *eight* in glossary.

49. Tib. *dbyings*; Skt. *dhātu*. This term as it appears here and in many other instances in Dzokchen literature is an abbreviation of *dharmadhātu*, or the “absolute space of phenomena.” This does not refer to space in the reified, Newtonian sense, but rather to an ultimate dimension of space out of which all manifestations of relative space-time and mass-energy emerge, in which they are present, and into which they eventually dissolve. Likewise, all manifestations of relative states of consciousness and mental processes emerge as displays of primordial consciousness, which has always been indivisible from the absolute space of phenomena.

50. Tib. *sgrar snang ba'i rgyud*. Tantras manifesting as sounds are view transmission or both view and symbolic transmission.

51. Tib. *sgrar grags pa'i rgyud*. Tantras uttered as sounds consist of the oral transmission of great masters.

52. Tib. *brdar gyur pa'i rgyud*. Symbolic tantras have been made into symbols.

53. The seven vajra qualities are invulnerability, indestructibility, reality, incorruptibility, stability, total unobstructability, and invincibility.

54. Tib. *Rgyud bla ma*; Skt. *Uttaratantra*. Treatise by Asaṅga, attributed to Maitreya.

55. The eight extremes of conceptual elaboration are origination and cessation, existence and nonexistence, going and coming, and unity and diversity.

56. The three doors of liberation are emptiness, signlessness, and desirelessness.

Phase 1: Taking the Impure Mind as the Path

2. The Discussion of the Contributing Conditions

For the satisfaction of the apparitional display of his circle of disciples, the supreme teacher, Samantabhadra, Omnipresent Lord Vajra, declared, “Listen!” to his circle of disciples, who were the nondual display of his own creative power.

THE TOPIC OF discussion is the request to explain the meaning of the tantra, for this is the condition that contributed to the emergence of the teaching. In this case, as a result of the natural sound of ultimate reality arousing the circle of disciples to make the request, the meaning of the tantra was ready to emerge in accordance with the minds of disciples of the future. **For the satisfaction of his circle of disciples**, who were an **apparitional display of** primordial consciousness, the self-appearing, **supreme teacher** who surpasses other buddhas, **Samantabhadra, Omnipresent Lord**, the great **Vajradhara, declared, “Listen!”** Having caught their attention, the teacher spoke **to his emanated circle of disciples, who were the nondual display of his own creative power.** Among common and uncommon teachings, these were the latter, for the minds of the teacher and of his circle of disciples were indivisible, which is to say that the teacher exhorted and taught himself, and not anyone else.

The four related aspects of the significance of this section are (a) the subject of this tantra, namely the pristine awareness that is present in the ground dharmakāya, (b) the significance of gaining realization by hearing and reflecting upon the words of this tantra, (c) the essential significance of gaining liberation either in this life or in the intermediate period⁵⁷ by practicing the realized meaning [350] with unflagging enthusiasm, and (d) the interdependent relationship among these aspects. These four aspects are characteristics of an authentic tantra or treatise.

3. The Resultant Comprehension of the Actual Meaning

of the Tantra

This section has three parts: (a) the path of cutting through to original purity, (b) the path of direct crossing over to spontaneous actualization, and (c) the manner in which the indivisible nature of the ground and the fruition is actualized.

a. The Path of Cutting Through to Original Purity

This section has three parts: (i) identifying the creator of all phenomena as the mind, (ii) establishing the mind as baseless and rootless, and (iii) how individuals with specific faculties may enter the path.

i. Identifying the Creator of All Phenomena as the Mind

Examine the body, speech, and mind, and among them recognize the one that is primary as the all-creating sovereign.

Here is the way to **examine** the agent, or **sovereign**, that **creates all** phenomena as the mind, which is **primary among the body, speech, and mind**. During the daytime, nighttime, and the intermediate period, due to the mind's self-grasping, the body and speech appear to the mind. Over the course of a lifetime, it is the mind that experiences joy and sorrow. Finally, when the body and mind separate, the body remains as a corpse. When the speech disappears without a trace, the mind follows after karma and is the agent that wanders in saṃsāra. From one perspective, for those three reasons, among them **recognize** the mind as primary. From another perspective, none of those three is anything other than the mind; [351] therefore, by ascertaining them as the mind alone, among them recognize the mind as primary. The former perspective is determined in accordance with their conventional mode of appearances, while the latter perspective is determined in accordance with their conventional mode of existence.

To further explain the meaning of the latter perspective, Mahāpaṇḍita Nāropa's treatise *Synthesis of the View* states:

All phenomena that appear and come into being
have no existence apart from the self-aware mind,
for it causes them to appear and be clear,
just like the experience of your own awareness.

If they were not the mind,
they would be unrelated to the mind and would not appear at all.
Determine relative truth⁵⁸ in that way.

To the deluded mind, the body and mind appear as if they were different, but in terms of their mode of existence, they directly appear to nonconceptual consciousness and are clearly experienced. This indicates that they exist not as something material but simply as the natural illumination of your own awareness, like consciousness that experiences joy and sorrow. If they were not the mind but were instead matter, like light and darkness, they could never interact with each other, so they could never appear at all. For these reasons, the body, speech, and all other appearing phenomena are established as the mind.

ii. Establishing the Mind as Baseless and Rootless

**The shape and color of the all-creating sovereign,
as well as its origin, location, and destination, are objectless openness.
This is the spontaneous actualization of the essential nature of the path of
cutting through. [352]**

By examining in that way whether the mind that is the **all-creating sovereign** of the body, speech, and mind — or of all phenomena — is really existent or really nonexistent, the mind is found to have no basis or root, so it is not established as having any **shape** or **color**. The five elements and five [sensory] objects appear like objects of the mind, and your own body appears as its base. But if all these are investigated from an ultimate perspective, they are found to be like space, not truly established as either one thing or many. Ascertaining **the origin, location, and destination** [of the mind] as **objectless openness is the spontaneous actualization of the essential nature of the path of cutting through**. This is not something freshly achieved, but is simply the knowledge of the mode of being of the nature of existence.

iii. How Individuals with Specific Faculties May Enter the Path

This section has two parts: (A') how individuals of superior faculties enter the path and (B') how individuals of middling and inferior faculties enter the path.

A' How Individuals of Superior Faculties Enter the Path

**Simultaneous individuals enter the path with no basis and no root.
Others should come to rest in space,
and within three weeks they will certainly awaken and enter the path.**

Simply by determining the ultimate nature of the mind as having **no basis and no root**, **individuals** with superior faculties, who are of the **simultaneous** class,⁵⁹ identify the vast, unimpeded consciousness that remains after discerning wisdom has naturally vanished. Since this is primordial consciousness, which transcends the mind, they **enter the authentic path**. [353]

B' How Individuals of Middling and Inferior Faculties Enter the Path

This section has two parts: (1') how individuals of middling faculties enter the path and (2') how individuals of inferior faculties enter the path.

1' How Individuals of Middling Faculties Enter the Path

The first of these two kinds of individuals, namely, **others** who do not have the fortune to identify primordial consciousness in that way, should retire to a solitary place, practice guru yoga, and take the four empowerments.⁶⁰ Then they should meditate on the domain of **space**,⁶¹ a pebble, a stick, or such things as a Buddha image or seed syllable, or at their heart they may visualize a radiant orb of five-colored light. By sustaining their attention and **resting** in meditative equipoise, **within three weeks** they will see with the eye of wisdom the primordial nature of existence. Then **they will certainly awaken and enter the path** of the Great Perfection.

2' How Individuals of Inferior Faculties Enter the Path

This section has two parts: (a') taking aspects of the mind as the path and (b') taking the essential nature as the path.

a' Taking Aspects of the Mind as the Path

This section has three parts: (i') the teaching, (ii') the explanation, and (iii') the

synthesis.

i' The Teaching

Those of the class with inferior faculties identify stillness and movement, and by taking the mind as the path, they are led to the absolute space of pristine awareness.

Those of the class with inferior faculties, not having the fortune to **identify** [primordial consciousness] in that way, first recognize the difference between **stillness** with respect to consciousness and the **movement** of thoughts. **And, by first taking** the aspects of **the mind as the path**, finally **they are led to the absolute space of pristine awareness.**

ii' The Elaborate Explanation of How This Occurs

This section has four parts: (A'') mindfulness of the essential nature of the path, [354] (B'') specific meditative experiences to be purified, (C'') the essential nature of that which is to be abandoned and its remedy, and (D'') how never to be separated from the experience of the pith instructions.

A'' Mindfulness of the Essential Nature of the Path

First is single-pointed unification of the two.

Then by resting without observing, its natural power manifests.

Abide loosely without mindfulness in a vacuous, wide-open clarity.

And resting in a luminous vacuity is called self-illuminating mindfulness.

According to the teachings, there are four types of mindfulness of the essential nature of the path. The **first** entails distinguishing between stillness and movement, and by the power of familiarizing yourself with their different appearances, there is *single-pointed* mindfulness of the **unification of the two**. **Then**, even while **resting without** strenuously **observing** them like before, as **its natural power manifests**, there is *manifest* mindfulness. **Abiding loosely without mindfulness in a vacuous, wide-open clarity**, a spacious vacuity, constitutes lying down on a bed that is devoid of mindfulness, which is the

substrate.⁶² Once coarse mindfulness has subsided, **resting in a luminous vacuity is called self-illuminating mindfulness**, or the *substrate consciousness*.

The former two kinds of mindfulness [single-pointed mindfulness and manifest mindfulness] directly perceive whatever creative displays arise, while during the latter two [the absence of mindfulness and self-illuminating mindfulness], apart from abiding solely in dependence upon a subtle mode of apprehension, all radiant appearances and creative displays of thoughts cease, so there is only nonconceptuality. These kinds of mindfulness are aroused by the path, and since they descend to the two types of substrate,⁶³ they are called the *substrates of descent*. [355] Some teachers regard the first as the “one taste” and the second as “freedom from conceptual elaboration.”⁶⁴ Others claim it is ethically neutral, but whatever they call it, you have arrived at the essential nature of the mind.⁶⁵

B'' Specific Meditative Experiences to Be Purified

**For everyone the various experiences of bliss, vacuity, and luminosity become objects of craving and attachment;
and meditative experiences of illnesses and discomfort in the body, speech,
and mind**

sporadically arise over time.

Occasionally on this path, due to being bound by the coarse and subtle grasping of mindfulness, there certainly arise **various experiences for everyone**, such as **bliss** like the warmth of a fire, **luminosity** like the breaking of the dawn, and **vacuity**, or nonconceptuality, like an ocean unmoved by waves. However, if you don't know that these deceptive meditative experiences are not to be believed or trusted, and if you fixate on them as the highest virtues such that they **become objects of craving and attachment**, they will become nothing more than causes of rebirth in the three realms of mundane existence. Therefore, even if you cultivate them for a long time, you will not rise above saṃsāra. Moreover, from your guru's teachings, you must thoroughly understand how outer upheavals of apparitions of gods and demons, inner upheavals of physical illnesses, and secret upheavals of various joys and sorrows and so on **sporadically arise over time** as various **meditative experiences of illnesses and discomfort in the body,**

speech, and mind. [356]

C" Recognizing the Essential Nature of That Which Is to Be Abandoned and Its Direct Remedy as the Foremost Path

This section has two parts: (1") recognizing the essential nature of that which is to be abandoned and (2") presenting the direct remedy as the foremost path.

1" Recognizing the Essential Nature of That Which Is to Be Abandoned

Whenever you proudly hope for good things and cling to them, and fear bad things and reify inflictors of harm, you have stumbled upon a dangerous juncture that can lead you astray.

Whenever you have fallen under the influence of **proudly hoping for and clinging to things** that seem to be **good**, such as material gain, respect, and renown, **and fearing things** that seem to be **bad**, such as misconduct, abuse, and slander by your enemies — this makes for misery and suffering. In short, insofar as you **reify** all gods and **inflictors of harm** and all joys and sorrows, **you have stumbled upon a dangerous, obstructive juncture that can lead you astray.** Thinking “I will be unable to ascend to the supreme city of great liberation,” take this to heart. Whatever good and bad experiences, joys and sorrows, and so on arise, there is no need to counteract them, for mere appearances cannot bind you, as Ācārya Āryadeva wrote:

These are mere appearances and are not to be blocked.
Instead, stop reifying them.

The real root of the thing to be terminated is the mind that reifies appearances. Outwardly, everything that appears as demons, malevolent spirits, and deceptive māras arises from nothing other than this root. [357] Consequently, without subduing it, you can subdue all the outward demons and malevolent spirits one by one, yet never subdue them all.

2" Presenting the Direct Remedy as the Foremost Path

The general synthesis that is the sole, vital point of the path is ascertaining all experiences of pleasure, pain, and indifference as false impressions of unreal meditative experiences.

By releasing them, without blocking or embracing them, you bring an end to deviations and losses, and this is the one eye of wisdom.

The general synthesis that is the remedy for all that is to be abandoned and the sole, vital point of all paths is ascertaining that even though **all** good and bad experiences of pleasure, pain, and indifference appear, they are unreal, delusive appearances, nothing more than **false impressions of unreal meditative experiences. By releasing them** as being of one taste, **without blocking** the bad **or embracing** the good, adverse circumstances will arise as the path and obstructive conditions will arise as aids. In so doing, **you bring an end to** the adversities of **deviations, losses,** and mistakes. The felicity of the **wisdom** of unmistakably seeing the profound meaning of the nature of existence is indispensable for entering the path, so **this is like the one eye.** A more elaborate explanation will be presented below on how everything that appears consists of delusive appearances that are not established as real.

This is the true path praised by the jinas for realizing the meaning of inactivity and nonexertion, but for this to occur, you must first familiarize yourself with [358] the union of *śamatha* entailing a meditative object and *vipaśyanā* entailing investigation and analysis. Novices should practice *śamatha* from the phase of single-pointedness until the experience of conscious awareness, as well as *vipaśyanā*, which is implicitly taught here, without letting them become disunited from each other. So here they are taught sequentially.

D" How Never to Be Separated from the Experience of the Pith Instructions

Those who have become distant from sublime spiritual mentors should cherish the five topics as the sublimity of the path.

If you strive too hard in practicing single-pointedness, the power of your mind will decline; and with stagnant mindfulness,

**although your body is human, your mind becomes that of an animal.
Some people may stray into delirium;
so devote yourself to a spiritual mentor, without ever being separated from
him.**

Those who have become distant from sublime spiritual mentors who reveal the path may not know how to distinguish between what is and is not the path or how to cut through their uncertainties and false assumptions. So the previously presented **five topics** of stillness and movement and the four kinds of mindfulness⁶⁶ are **the sublimity of the path**. You should know that they are indispensable when first venturing into practice, and you must **cherish** this knowledge by gaining the firm certainty of sound understanding.

Some regard the practice that is merely preliminary as being the ultimate nature of existence and strive only **in the practice** of **single-pointedness**. Or, without knowing how to apply the appropriate degree of effort in accordance with the state of their own mindstreams, like blocking a water canal, they regard the mere single-pointed awareness of stopping thoughts as the [359] highest view and meditation. Then, **if they strive much too hard** in the practice, the functioning of the channels and elements — for those people who are dominant in the water element or earth element — causes the analytical **power of their minds to decline**. Their **mindfulness then becomes stagnant**, and **though their body is human, their mind becomes that of an animal** by becoming stupid and turgid. With this in mind, Mañjughoṣa Sakya Paṇchen wrote:

Striving only in meditation, without study,
leads to taking rebirth as an animal.

Some people with a fire constitution or with an air constitution⁶⁷ **may stray off** the path as their minds become muddled due to **delirium**, fainting, and so on. **So** cut through your false assumptions by **devoting yourself to a sublime spiritual mentor** who knows how to teach the essential points of this path correctly, **without ever being separated from him**. Even if you lack such good fortune [of meeting a qualified spiritual mentor], it is indispensable that you, without falling into indolence, properly seek out and familiarize yourself with the pith instructions of the vidyādhara of the past who have achieved siddhis by way of this path.

iii' The Synthesis

**In short, even if you strive diligently in this phase of these practices for a long time,
taking the mind as the path
does not bring you even a hair's breadth closer to the paths
of liberation and omniscience,
and your life will certainly have been spent in vain!
So understand this, you fortunate people.**

In short, [360] these practices, from *śamatha* to luminous, cognizant consciousness and the substrate consciousness, as taught previously, constitute the **phase of taking** the aspects of **the mind as the path**. But as long as it is divorced from the *vipaśyanā* of knowing the nature of existence, this **does not bring you even a hair's breadth closer to the path of liberation** from the suffering of mundane existence **and** the path of **omniscience** that liberates from the two extremes.⁶⁸ Thus, **even if you strive diligently in these practices for a long time**, this does nothing more than perpetuate *saṃsāra*. **So understand** how **your life will certainly have been spent in vain!** With these words he offered compassionate advice to **fortunate people** who are following this path.

However, whether or not you have identified pristine awareness within yourself, you who become muddled due to distraction and sloth should first mount your discursive mind, which is like a cripple, onto your vital energy,⁶⁹

which is like a blind, wild steed. By tethering [your mind] with meditative experience and sustained attention so that you can meditate uninterruptedly, eventually all coarse and subtle obsessive thoughts will seem to be purified — and uncontrived, primordially present consciousness will manifest. When you alight upon the great nonmeditation of pristine awareness, [361] it is easy to connect with the guru's introduction to pristine awareness. Given how very important it is for disciples not to stray onto false paths, this needs to be clearly taught, as was implied in the preceding passage.

This concludes the synthesis of this phase, revealed in the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*.

⁵⁷. Tib. *bar do*. In contexts such as this, the “intermediate period” refers to the interval between death and one's next rebirth, which includes two of the six transitional phases, namely the transitional phase of ultimate reality and the transitional phase of becoming.

58. Tib. *kun rdzob bden pa*; Skt. *saṃvṛtisatya*. Lit. “totally obscurational truth,” such provisional, conventional truths appear in a manner contrary to their mode of existence and thereby obscure the nature of ultimate truth (Tib. *don dam bden pa*; Skt. *paramārthasatya*).

59. Tib. *gcig car ba'i rigs can*. In this context, this refers to the class of individuals who receive teachings on the Great Perfection and simultaneously gain realization of the view.

60. The four empowerments are (1) the vase, or water, empowerment, (2) the secret, or crown, empowerment, (3) the wisdom–primordial-consciousness, or vajra, empowerment, and (4) the word, or bell, empowerment.

61. Sera Khandro in *Garland for the Delight of the Fortunate* says, “As for external space, all phenomena included in the vast outer physical worlds; the multitudes of inner, animate sentient inhabitants; the well-displayed intervening appearances of the five senses; your own body, aggregates, elements, and sense bases; and all the appearances and mindsets of ordinary sentient beings are external space.” See GD 87.

62. Tib. *kun gzhi*; Skt. *ālaya*. The vacuous space of the mind as it is directly perceived by the substrate consciousness (Tib. *kun gzhi rnam shes*; Skt. *ālayavijñāna*).

63. The two types of substrate are the actual substrate (corresponding to the absence of mindfulness) and the temporarily luminous substrate (corresponding to self-illuminating mindfulness). The former is a mindless vacuity, like the sky at dusk, covered over by darkness, while the latter makes it possible for thoughts to appear, just as a polished mirror reflects a face. By letting the temporarily luminous substrate consciousness rest in the pristine nature of emptiness, the assemblies of roving thoughts cease, causing a radiant vacuity to appear. This corresponds to the second type of substrate.

64. Here the “first” refers to the experience of the actual substrate, and the “second” refers to the temporarily luminous substrate. The four sequential yogas of the Mahāmudrā tradition are single-pointedness, freedom from conceptual elaboration, one taste, and nonmeditation. The dissolution of the coarse mind into the substrate consciousness, culminating in the experience of self-illuminating mindfulness, signifies the achievement of śamatha, or the threshold (Tib. *nyer bsdogs*; Skt. *sāmantaka*) of the first *dhyāna*. But some teachers mistake this for the much deeper realizations of pristine awareness that occur in the third and second yogas of Mahāmudrā. For a detailed explanation of how the four yogas of Mahāmudrā relate to the stages of practice of Dzokchen, see chapters 10 and 11 of Karma Chagmé, *Naked Awareness: Practical Teachings on the Union of Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen*, commentary by Gyatrul Rinpoche, trans. B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2000).

65. These two sentences compare with VE 47.

66. These five topics are the ability to recognize the difference between stillness with respect to consciousness and the movement of thoughts, followed by the four kinds of mindfulness: single-pointed mindfulness, manifest mindfulness, the absence of mindfulness, and self-illuminating mindfulness.

67. People with a fire constitution characteristically have the capacity to initiate projects and carry them through to completion. They have intuition and enthusiasm, make inspired undertakings, and take joy in their work and accomplishments; but they are easily agitated, irritable, impetuous, unstable, restless, intolerant, garrulous, and prone to insomnia. People with an air constitution characteristically have the ability to change negative situations into positive ones, and they have curiosity and flexibility of intellect; but they have little stability or contentment, they are fickle, jittery, unfocused, anxious, flighty, and emotionally unstable, and they have difficulty accepting things as they are.

68. In this context the two extremes are the extreme of mundane existence, or saṃsāra, and of peace, or nirvāṇa.

69. The Tibetan term here is *rlung*, which may refer to the vital energies or to the air element. Within the body, the air element primarily refers to the breath, and one way of your mind riding the steed of the vital

energies on the pathways of the channels is the practice of vase breathing. Alternatively, this passage may be interpreted as referring simply to mindfulness of breathing, which is an especially effective method for cultivating sustained attention, leading to the subsiding of all coarse and subtle obsessive thoughts.

Phase 2: Revealing Your Own Face as the Sharp Vajra of Vipāśyanā

b' Taking the Essential Nature as the Path

THIS SECTION has two parts: (i') the path pristine awareness, free of conceptual elaboration and (ii') the ground pristine awareness, the great freedom from extremes.

i' The Path Pristine Awareness, Free of Conceptual Elaboration

This section has two parts: (A'') the teaching and (B'') the explanation.

A'' The Teaching

With the manifestation of the sharp vajra of wisdom,

For all sentient beings — without any distinctions of their being good or bad — primordially present, supreme **wisdom** is **the sharp vajra**, which is indivisible from emptiness. In the past it was obscured by ignorance, but in this phase, by the power of sublime pith instructions, it **manifests** and is seen, as if waking up from sleep.

B'' The Elaborate Explanation

This section has four parts: (1'') the six distinctions of pristine awareness, separate from the mind, (2'') the essential nature of resting in the innate nature, (3'') how to perfect the qualities of the path and fruition, and (4'') the greatness of individuals who realize this. [362]

1'' The Six Distinctions of Pristine Awareness, Separate

from the Mind

pristine awareness transcends the ethically neutral ground.

The **pristine awareness** that knows and identifies with great, pervasive wisdom the ethically neutral state — the ground of confusion for sentient beings, which becomes neither good nor bad — from the first instant has the distinction of **transcending the ethically neutral ground**. This distinction is explicitly presented, while the other five distinctions are implied, as follows.

At that time, appearances unimpededly arise in the domain of pristine awareness, and without reification or dualistic grasping, pristine awareness is imbued with the power of wisdom that realizes identitylessness. This is the distinction of transcending dualistic grasping. In the very instant that the eye of wisdom and primordial consciousness opens, there is the distinction of pristine awareness being separate from the mind. It holds within itself the radiance of both kinds of primordial consciousness⁷⁰ that master the essential nature and the natural radiance of that innate nature, so it has the distinction of natural liberation within itself. Without entering into the intellect or analysis, pristine awareness holds its own ground within itself, so it has the distinction of not relying upon objects or contributing conditions. Awareness that is free of such beliefs has mastery over great, natural liberation, so it has the distinction of abiding in its own ground and of buddhahood. Thus it is explained.

In general, [363] these are said to be characteristics of the path pristine awareness, but they are mere facsimiles. The actual characteristics are present only in the experience of the ground pristine awareness, with its great liberation from extremes, as stated in the teachings on severance:⁷¹

Meditating on outer manifestations of appearing objects over there in their own place,

on the inner “I,” or “self,” over here in its own place,

and on a mere vacuity in between

is how water turns into ice.

Note that few achieve liberation [in that way].⁷²

2" The Essential Nature of Resting in the Innate Nature

Being nothing whatsoever, [the essential nature] transcends all expressions of speech and thought.

In natural openness, with no modification, negation, or affirmation by meditation,

it is spontaneously actualized as the sharp vajra of wisdom.

The essential nature of unimpeded pristine awareness does not fall to either extreme of existence or nonexistence, so it is **nothing whatsoever**. Since all movement of words and thoughts ceases, **it transcends all expressions of speech and thought**. Abiding in **natural openness** — self-illuminating, free of any reified object, and **with no modification, negation, or affirmation** by any view or **meditation** — **is the sharp vajra of wisdom**, the experience of the **spontaneously actualized** essential nature.

At this time, due to the unimpeded creative power of pristine awareness, all appearances manifest, and the thoughts of a sentient being, for instance, disperse one by one as they dissolve, nondual with their objects, such that not even a single one remains. They are not the thoughts of a sentient being, either. [364] Mentation shifts to wisdom, the creative expressions [of the mind] shift to primordial consciousness, and stability is achieved in this, which is like water clear of sediment. So this is very important to know. If you do not identify this path — and on this basis realize the dharmakāya, primordial consciousness that is present in the ground of being — you can't avoid being propelled into the form and formless realms, and you won't achieve omniscient enlightenment. Therefore, when you identify this, if you practice single-pointedly without falling back into an ethically neutral state, finally the creative power of discerning primordial consciousness will blaze forth, and you will authentically experience ultimate reality, the nature of existence of suchness. In this way you will become enlightened as Samantabhadra, the original, primordial ground dharmakāya.

3'' How to Perfect the Qualities of the Path and Fruition

All the qualities of the view, meditation, and conduct, as well as the ground, path, and fruition,

together with taking refuge, bodhicitta, the six perfections, and the maṇḍalas of deities and mantras,

are collectively perfected in the sharp vajra.

If you truly realize the nature of existence and gradually engage in meditative equipoise and postmeditative practice, great waves of accumulations of merit and knowledge will be simultaneously perfected in the following ways: With a **view** that has no viewpoint, **meditation** that has no mode of apprehension, and supreme **conduct** that is without modification, the view, meditation, and conduct are perfected. The **ground** of great primordial liberation, [365] the **path** of great natural rest, and the **fruition** of great natural liberation are merely nominal divisions, for they are of one essential nature. So **all the qualities** of the ground, path, and fruition are perfected.

The originally pure essential nature of the dharmakāya, the spontaneously actualized manifest nature of the saṃbhogakāya, and the all-pervasive compassion of the nirmāṇakāya are the perfection of the three kāyas. Self-emergent pristine awareness is the essential nature of the Three Jewels, so this is truly **taking refuge** in the nature of existence. Since it liberates into the equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, it perfects ultimate **bodhicitta**. Nongrasping is generosity, nonconfusion is ethical discipline, nonchanging is patience, nonstriving is enthusiasm, nonmeditation is meditation, and nonerring is wisdom. So **the six perfections** are simultaneously perfected. Take the dharmakāya Samantabhadra as your guru; unify all the myriad peaceful and wrathful jinas and devote yourself to their essence as your personal deity; and nondually synthesize the ḍākinīs of the absolute space of primordial consciousness in the space of Samantabhadrī, which is absolute space itself, and enter her womb. So **the maṇḍalas of deities and mantras** — which are all the maṇḍalas without exception — **are collectively perfected in the sharp vajra**, in the essential nature of pristine awareness devoid of activity. Therefore, this is of profound significance and is very potent. [366]

4" The Greatness of Individuals Who Realize This

**Sentient beings under the domination of the māras of ignorance and mental afflictions
are distinguished from the very instant
they experience the perfect enlightenment of omniscience,
and they become fields of merit for sentient beings, including gods.**

This is how pathetic **sentient beings under the domination of the māras of karma and mental afflictions** in the dark gloom of **ignorance** in the terrifying prison of saṃsāra **are distinguished** and ennobled — such that their mindstreams are no longer as they were before — **from the very instant** that they encounter their own face as the pristine awareness of the nature of existence. From that time forward, **they experience only the perfect enlightenment of omniscience**, without ever reverting to inferior or false paths. In the meantime, **they become sublime fields for sentient beings, including gods**, to accumulate **merit**. This concludes the second phase of the *Sharp Vajra*.

70. The two aspects of primordial consciousness are knowing the nature of existence and perceiving the full range of phenomena. They correspond to knowing the essential nature of pristine awareness and perceiving all the manifestations of its natural radiance.

71. Tib. *gcod*. Severance is a meditative practice of imaginatively offering up your entire being as a means to realizing the empty nature of all phenomena, severing all clinging to the appearances of the three realms, and realizing that all gods and demons are none other than your own appearances.

72. Tib. *gcod khrid kyi skabs*. This quote is from *The Profound Heart Essence of Saraha*, translated in Dudjom Lingpa and Pema Lungtok Gyatso, *Dudjom Lingpa's Chöd and An Ambrosia Ocean of Sublime Explanations*, trans. Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro (Ashland, OR: Berotsana Publications, 2014), 457.

Phase 3: Revealing the Ground Dharmakāya

ii' Directly Identifying Within Yourself the Ground Pristine Awareness, the Great Freedom from Extremes

THIS SECTION has six parts: (A") the nature of the pure ground, (B") the genesis of conventional names, (C") the process of delusion in impure saṃsāra, (D") prayers for swiftly realizing and experiencing the meaning of the tantra, (E") devotion to the pith instructions for the moment of death and so forth if you have not earnestly devoted yourself to the tenet system in this lifetime, and (F") unique teachings of the Great Perfection on key distinctions. [367]

A" The Nature of the Pure Ground

This section has two parts: (1") how the delusive appearances of saṃsāra do not in fact exist and (2") the explanation of the nondelusive essential nature, the primordial ground, as the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness.

1" How the Delusive Appearances of Saṃsāra Do Not In Fact Exist

This is how, from the time that dualistic thoughts arise, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa seem to be different, while never wavering from the expanse of the ground of being. The *Reverberation of Sound Root Tantra* states:

If you do not recognize as your own essential nature
the root that is the indivisible, sole cause,
this is the beginning of saṃsāra.

By determining that all phenomena of saṃsāra are included among subjects and objects, you will swiftly sever the life force of delusion. Here is how to determine the nature of subjects and objects: By first determining this on a coarse level and then on a subtle level, the very subtle level will be easy to realize. With this in mind, here are teachings on the three divisions of outer,

inner, and secret subjects and objects: First, to determine the nature of outer subjects and objects, there are three sections: (a'') determining the identitylessness of subjective persons, (b'') determining the identitylessness of objective phenomena, and (c'') fundamentally recognizing them as one emptiness. [368]

a'' Determining the Identitylessness of Subjective Persons

This section has two parts: (i'') the teaching and (ii'') the explanation.

i'' The Teaching

**The sharp vajra of discerning wisdom
demolishes the mountain of saṃsāra of self-concepts.**

The sharp vajra of primordial consciousness that arises from the power of **discerning wisdom** utterly **demolishes the** mighty, towering **mountain of saṃsāra of** habitual propensities that stem from our beginningless habituation to **self-concepts**.

ii'' The Explanation

This section has two parts: (A''') recognizing self-concepts as the root of mundane existence and (B''') recognizing their emptiness by their mere appearance.

A''' Recognizing Self-Concepts as the Root of Mundane Existence

Investigate the origin, location, and destination of the name and referent of that which is grasped as the “I,” which is the root of saṃsāra.

Here is **the root of** wandering in **saṃsāra**: Due to the continuum of consciousness of **grasping at the “I”** while there is no “I” in the expanse of the ground of being, all appearances and mindsets fleetingly emerge, even though they do not exist. Why? It is in the nature of things that whenever the thought of grasping at the “I” is present, both appearances and mindsets naturally arise.

Scriptural sources and reasoning authentically demonstrate that if there is no grasping at the “I,” appearances and mindsets do not occur either. So the thought of grasping at the “I” where there is no “I” is indubitably ascertained as the root of mundane existence.

B''' Recognizing Their Emptiness by Their Mere Appearance

Decisively recognizing it as objectless emptiness

is determining personal identitylessness.

Here is how such a self is found to be empty by **investigating its origin, location, and destination**, as well as [369] its **name and referent**: All possible appearances first arose from the self, so their origin is empty of being anywhere else. Once they have arisen, they are present in the domain of the self, so they are empty of being located anywhere else. Finally, they disappear together with the self, so they are empty of any other destination.

In a similar fashion, here is how the reality of the basis of designation of the name *self* is unestablished: Between the body and mind, neither the self nor its name is established as the body. Each body part has its own name, so it is not given the name *self*. The collection of all its components may be called a *collection* or a *body*, but this does not bear the name *self*. The mind, which has no basis or root, is designated as *mind*, but it does not bear the name *self*. So the basis of designation of the self is empty, which means that neither the self nor its name exists.

Moreover, there is no self that is established as something other than the body and mind. If the self did exist, it should appear and therefore be observable, but it isn't. So the self is not established as anything real or substantial. In summary, since the basis of designation of its name is not established for the self, neither the self nor its name exists. [370] Since the self is not established as substantially real, its basis of designation is not established as real either. Since it doesn't exist, the name imputed to it is nothing more than an expression. Therefore, in reality, the so-called self is nothing more than an appearance and a designation in dependence upon the body and mind. When it is **decisively recognized as objectless emptiness, personal identitylessness is determined.**

b'' Determining the Identitylessness of Objective Phenomena

This section has four parts: (i'') seeking the bases of designation of names, (ii'') destroying grasping at the permanence of things, (iii'') combating the faults of benefit and harm, and (iv'') collapsing the false cave⁷³ of hopes and fears.

i'' Seeking the Bases of Designation of Names

Seek the bases of designation of the names of the self and of objects, and decisively recognize them as objectless emptiness.

By discerningly **seeking the bases of designation of the names of the subjective self and of all that appears as objects** to this self, such as the five aggregates and the five sensory objects that seem to be “mine,” **decisively recognize them as objectless emptiness**, since all names are nothing more than interdependent imputations, and their bases of designation are not established as inherently real.

ii'' Destroying Grasping At the Permanence of Things

Investigate how all things, starting with partless elementary particles, are empty in the sense of being devoid of inherent nature. Then decisively recognize objectless emptiness in the absolute space of phenomena in the worlds of appearances of this life, the hereafter, and dreams.

In terms of appearances, **all things** seem to be absolutely existent, real, and permanent; but if they are investigated, [371] all coarse phenomena are found to be nothing more than mere appearances arising in dependence upon configurations of numerous elementary particles. Not a single coarse phenomenon is established as being inherently real. Even elementary particles are nothing more than appearances arising in dependence upon assemblies of their component features. Not a single **elementary particle** is established as being inherently real, so in reality they are **partless**. By **investigating how they are empty in the sense of being devoid of inherent nature** from the very

moment they appear, all phenomena are found to be nothing more than mere clear appearances, and there is nothing that corresponds to your habitual awareness of desires and fears. In terms of **worlds of appearances of this life, the hereafter, and dreams**, the phenomena of the physical world, the appearances of its sentient inhabitants, and all appearances to the five physical senses are to be **decisively recognized as objectless emptiness in absolute space**.

To expand on this phase, if all phenomena were in fact established as truly existent and were not mere delusive appearances, they would certainly have to be replete with all the seven vajra qualities — that is, they would be invulnerable, indestructible, real, incorruptible, stable, totally unobstructable, and totally invincible. But they do not have even one of these qualities, for it is evident that they are not established as real and are nothing more than mere delusive appearances, like those in a dream. The assertion that space is replete with all these qualities [372] is premised on the crucial point that emptiness is not established as existing by its own characteristics. Bearing this in mind, it is imperative to realize the immutable mode of existence of ultimate reality. This is not taught in order to depict space as being permanent and truly existent versus the elements and their emergent properties as not being permanent or truly existent.

Here is a summary of all the teachings presenting many reasons that refute the misconception that daytime appearances are left behind when you are asleep at night: If the delusive mode of appearances is thought to be compelling, daytime appearances are asserted to linger on during the nighttime, because deluded people feel their perceptions are infallible. If the conventional nature of existence is thought to be compelling, conventional valid cognition invalidates the notion that they linger on, for valid cognition establishes that all daytime appearances vanish and nighttime appearances freshly emerge. It is certain that the fact that they do not linger on is unmistakable, as the *King of Samādhi Sūtra* (*Samādhirāja Sūtra*) states:

The visual, auditory, and olfactory senses are not valid cognitions,
nor are the gustatory, tactile, or mental.
If these senses were valid,
who would need the path of the *āryas*?

This is said because that which is perceived by ordinary, childish people is

delusive, not valid. [373] The teachings counteract such delusive perceptions while showing how the teachings on conventional, relative truth are unmistaken. This illustrates all such reasonings, so if no such distinction is made, I think it would be difficult to be released from the knots of uncertainty.

iii" Combating the Faults of Benefit and Harm

Decisively understand that the karmic relationships of virtue and vice, as well as the benefit and harm from gods and demons, are of the nature of objectless openness.

If the **karmic relationships of virtue and vice, as well as the benefit and harm from gods and demons**, are investigated with regard to the absolute space of phenomena, which is the nature of pristine space, all virtue and vice that is accumulated by way of the body, speech, and mind is found not to exist anywhere. If it all disappears into **the nature** of nothingness — the **openness of objectless** emptiness — then all causal virtues and vices and resultant joys and sorrows are nothing more than mere appearances of performing actions and experiencing their consequences. Even if you think they benefit or harm your mind or body, since both objects and subjects are established as being no more real than dreams, all mental activities of virtue and vice and all joys and sorrows are merely experiential appearances. Therefore, **decisively understand** all actions, joys, and sorrows as having no physical or substantially real existence. This verse indicates that both virtue and vice, as well as the phenomena of benefit and harm by gods and demons, are of the nature of one emptiness that is the ground of being. [374]

Until these delusive appearances dissolve into the absolute space of phenomena, whatever coarse or subtle positive and negative actions you commit will add to your rebirths in this world of saṃsāra until their fully matured results are exhausted. So eternal well-being will certainly not be achieved. The reason why it is necessary to determine the nature of virtue is that the principal path for achieving the states of liberation and omniscience is wisdom, as Śāntideva wrote:

The Sage taught this entire tenet system
for the sake of wisdom;
therefore, with the desire to ward off suffering,

one should develop wisdom.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, when foolish people who are drawn to experiences involving craving meditate on emptiness, this doesn't satisfy their craving, and so they lose confidence and trust. Because this doesn't involve any striving or modification, they think it is a waste of time, and so they apply themselves to prostrations, circumambulations, and so on. This verse is to help them understand that this meditation is superior to those methods. Moreover, some people who take pride in being contemplatives marginalize the view, which is the essential nature of meditation, and meditate only on the luminosity and emptiness of the mind. This is taught so that such people may know not to devote their lives solely to the practice of physical and verbal virtues, [375] but to practice by integrating the view and meditation.

By determining the nature of evil, you find that the essential nature of all obscurations is ignorance of your own nature. Understand that this cannot be purified merely by virtuous physical and verbal practices, but only by cultivating awareness of your own face — the nature of existence. Then you must have conviction in the authentic path, renounce the nine kinds of activity,⁷⁵ and apply yourself [to the practice] until you die.

If you investigate the protective gods and harmful demons, you find that the five objective elements along with such things as mountains, stones, and houses do not give rise to gods or demons. These are not their dwelling places after they have arisen, and there is nowhere they go in the end. Why? Because they are not established as existing in reality — they are all your own appearances, like delusive phenomena in a dream. It is impossible for them to help or harm you, for they are not physical entities that help or harm physical entities. If gods and demons were physical, they should be observable, but they are not. [376] And nonphysical things cannot help or harm physical things, any more than the horn of a hare can inflict a wound. In short, however they appear — as physical or nonphysical — authoritative treatises and reasoning establish that they are nothing but your own appearances.

In general, although there are references to many types of gods and demons, the gods referred to in this context are those dwelling as mundane gods, not supramundane ones, and the demons referred to are mundane demons dwelling in saṃsāra. Therefore, come to a decisive understanding that all gods and demons, as well as all the help and harm that is attributed to them, are objectless, empty displays that are delusive, false impressions of individual sentient beings.

If this is not determined, from the very moment the aggregates that are grasped as “mine” are established as real, just as there are continuous appearances of the six classes of sentient beings — for as long as there is mental grasping and immersion in the confusion of the object of perception and the perceiver, the object of meditation and the meditator, and so on — there are bound to occur outer, inner, and secret upheavals. By regarding them as demonic, you turn away from the authentic path and go astray. In your meditation on deities in the stage of generation practice, if you falsely regard them as autonomous, this conceptually turns them into demons. In this way demons are forcefully conjured up, becoming māras for your life force. By placing your hopes in gods and fearing demons, [377] your thoughts arise as enemies, leading to a never-ending stream of illnesses, joys, and sorrows. Recognizing all gods and demons as your own appearances, like illusions and dreams, is the essential nature of severance, and this is an especially profound teaching on severing thoughts of grasping at gods and demons. So it is particularly indispensable for those who practice severance.

iv" Collapsing the False Cave of Hopes and Fears

**Cut through the basis and root of the origin, location, and destination
of the buddhas and displays of buddhafi elds,
and of the appearances, mindsets, and objects of the three realms of
saṃsāra.**

**Truly recognize everything as being of the nature of objectless emptiness,
without giving this mere lip service.**

If you investigate this intelligently, since every object is devoid of a basis and root, the pure objects of hope, the vast and numerous beautiful **displays** of pure **buddhas** and **buddhafi elds** imbued with bountiful sublime qualities, should not be regarded as anything other than the appearances of individual sentient beings. The *Inner Essence Tantra* states, “Displays of the buddhas as objects are paths of illusion.” The *Sublime Continuum (Uttaratantra)* states:

Just as the physical reflection of the King of the Gods appears
in the pure ground of lapis lazuli,
so does the physical reflection of the Lord of Sages
appear in the pure ground of the minds of sentient beings.

The dharmakāya of the buddhas is none other than the primordial ground of being, the sugatagarbha, [378] so it appears like reflections of the moon in the vessels of the minds of individual disciples in accordance with their self-grasping. Likewise, impure objects, including the **appearances of the three realms of saṃsāra** of the vast physical world, its numerous **sentient** inhabitants, and all the well-displayed appearances of the five sensory **objects**, are your own delusive appearances — mere dreams. *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* states:

Who devised the floor of heated iron?
And from where have those flames come?
The Sage declared that all of that
has arisen from the evil mind.⁷⁶

If you investigate this with awareness, you find that the initial **origin** from which they arise, the **location** where they then exist, and the final **destination** to which they go are all nonexistent. Moreover, by **cutting through the basis** that supports them as well as the **root** that generates them, they are found to be like reflections, so they are nothing more than illusions to your own mind, having no existence as autonomous objects. Therefore, **without giving this mere lip service**, on the basis of reality **truly recognize** this by gaining real certainty, free of doubt, as to how **everything is of one taste in the nature of objectless emptiness**.

c'' Fundamentally Recognizing Them as One Emptiness

This section has two parts: (i'') the short summary and (ii'') the elaborate explanation. [379]

i'' The Short Summary

The space of great emptiness acts as the ground of appearances of saṃsāra.

Now, we do not think that there is anything called the *sugatagarbha* apart from the true realization and recognition of the nature of existence of the **space of great emptiness** that appears during the daytime, the nighttime, and the

intermediate period. With this in mind Machik Lapdrön said, “The Buddha is the mind; the mind is space,” and Siddha Bagompa said, “Fathom this space! If it is realized as objectless, the great nail of nonmeditation is struck.” Therefore, since we do not assert the existence of any buddhas apart from the ultimate reality of the mind or the existence of the ultimate reality of the mind apart from space, when this space is not realized, it **acts as the ground of appearances of saṃsāra**.

ii" The Elaborate Explanation

This section has three parts: (A''') identifying the absolute space of phenomena as that which is to be realized, (B''') subjective primordial consciousness that arises in accordance with that, and (C''') pith instructions on dispelling obstacles and enhancing practice.

A''' Identifying the Absolute Space of Phenomena as That Which Is to Be Realized

**Decisively establish that space is the ground
of all phenomena in the panoramic sweep of objectless space.
Pristine space is the buddha,
the ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha.**

Thus, by **decisively** understanding the essential nature **of all phenomena in the panoramic sweep of** [380] empty, **objectless space**, this **space is established as the ground** of appearances of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Moreover, the essential nature of **space** is not immateriality devoid of faults and virtues, but is rather established as primordially **pristine** purity, free of faults and contamination, of the nature of clear light. This is the nature of existence and **is the true buddha**, and it is called **the ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha**, as stated in the *Two Segments*:

Sentient beings are themselves buddhas,
but they are temporarily obscured by contaminations;
when these are dispelled, they are buddhas.

Some people claim that even though the essential nature of the minds of sentient

beings may be regarded as the Buddha, the ultimate reality of the mind and space are not the same. The assertion in all the sūtras and tantras that the mind is groundless and rootless like space suggests a distinction between the reality and the metaphor. That claim is made from the perspective of the ways things appear in the conventional mode of appearance. However, the position here is primarily from the perspective of their conventional mode of existence, so there is no contradiction. In short, for all phenomena that are asserted to be your own appearances, no ground for their emergence can be found other than space, so there is no alternative but to affirm that space and the ultimate reality of the mind are nondual. [381]

B''' Subjective Primordial Consciousness That Arises in Accordance with That

Therefore, realize all phenomena as emptiness.

The experience of the conscious awareness of identitylessness is the sharp vajra itself, which is the consummation of pristine awareness that is present in the ground.

Therefore, the conscious awareness of realizing identitylessness — consisting of the continuous ascertainment that **realizes** the essential nature of **all phenomena** as ultimate reality, which is the nature of **empty** space — **is the sharp vajra itself. The direct experience** of the nature of space by great, omniscient wisdom is **the consummation of** the dharmakāya, **pristine awareness that is present in the ground.** This shows that identitylessness is the ultimate topic to be investigated with wisdom, so there is nothing better than this to enhance practice.

C''' Pith Instructions on Dispelling Obstacles and Enhancing Practice

Finally, in order to collapse the cave of fixations on hopes and fears, visualize your body, speech, and mind as the three vajras, and with the vital points of the pith instructions on the three great principles,

rove about in haunted places

and make the supreme offering of your cherished body.

By the power of this, the false cave of hopes and fears will collapse.

In that way, those who come to the **final** investigation of the view directly **collapse the false cave of fixations on hopes and fears. In order to** forcefully cut the ties of cherishing the body, which is the source of all faults and problems, **visualize your body, speech, and mind as the** nature of the primordially present **three vajras**, such that the physical world and its sentient inhabitants are none other than your own appearances. **The three great principles** are the initial suppression, interim suppression, and final suppression. Endowed **with the vital points of the pith instructions on** the profound meaning of severance, regard your body as a corpse, your awareness as the corpse-bearer, [382] craving as the rope, **haunted places** as charnel grounds, and gods and demons as vultures. Although there are outwardly no demons, in order to forcefully arouse the inner demons of obsessive thoughts, **rove about** by yourself, with no companions, **in** terrifying, dangerous places such as mountain caves, charnel grounds, abandoned houses, rocky caverns, rivers, and lakes. Imbued with the spirit of emptiness and compassion, **make the supreme offering of your cherished body. By the power of** taking **this** as your principal activity, due to the gradual occurrence of upheavals, apparitions, the endpoint, and the severance point, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa will be realized as your own appearances. Then **the false cave of hopes and fears will collapse**, and without abandoning the four māras, they will be liberated right where they are.

This concludes the third phase of the *Sharp Vajra*, namely, revealing the dharmakāya.

73. Tib. *rdzun phug rdib*. Lit. “collapse of the false cave,” which is one’s false shelter in delusional hopes and fears.

74. Śāntideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, trans. Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1997), 115.

75. See *activity, nine kinds of* in glossary.

76. Śāntideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, 48.

Phase 4: Determining the Characteristics and Qualities of the Ground

2" An Explanation of the Characteristics of the Nondelusive Essential Nature, the Kāyas, and Facets of Primordial Consciousness

THIS SECTION has two parts: (a'') the teaching and (b'') the explanation.

a'' The Teaching

The essential nature of the whole world of appearances is emptiness. Great emptiness is spontaneously actualized as the essential nature of the path.

Thus, **the essential nature of the whole world of appearances is** ascertained with pristine awareness as **emptiness**, and this **great emptiness is** primordially **spontaneously actualized as the essential nature of the path**. This is like waking up to the nature of existence within yourself, [383] or like the dawn breaking, for it is not modified with effort.

b'' The Explanation

This section has three parts: (i'') the ground Great Perfection of existence, (ii'') the path Great Perfection of realization, and (iii'') the fruitional Great Perfection of actualization.

i'' The Ground Great Perfection of Existence

This section has three parts: (A''') the actual characteristics of the ground, (B''') the context of skillful means and wisdom, and (C''') the summary of their meaning.

A''' The Actual Characteristics of the Ground

The essential nature of the dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha, is not modified or altered by either saṃsāra or nirvāṇa.

Free of the extremes of conceptual elaboration, it is imbued with the three doors of liberation.

It is spontaneously actualized as the five kāyas, the five buddha families, the five facets of primordial consciousness,

The essential nature of all knowable phenomena is the dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha, which is not modified or altered by the faults or virtues of either saṃsāra or nirvāṇa. It is free of the extremes of conceptual elaboration and is imbued with the three doors of liberation. It is primordially present in a fourfold nature as the **five kāyas, the five buddha families, the five facets of primordial consciousness**, and so forth:

(1) This ground sugatagarbha neither enhances nor is enhanced by all the facets of primordial consciousness and qualities of the domain of buddhahood, for it has no object.

(2) This ground sugatagarbha has not arisen with a beginning, end, or interim, it does not so arise, and it will not so arise, so it is free of the extreme of birth. Since it never becomes nonexistent, [384] it is free of the extreme of cessation. Since it does not fall to the extreme of existence and substantiality and has not been seen, is not seen, and will not be seen, even with the eyes of the jinas, it is free of the extreme of permanence. Since it does not fall to the extreme of nonexistence or nothingness and is established as the ground of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, it is free of the extreme of annihilation. Since there is no place or agent from where it first came, it is free of the extreme of coming. Since it transcends going to any place or being an agent in the three times, it is free of the extreme of going. Since it is of one taste as the essential nature of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, it is free of the extreme of diversity.⁷⁷

(3) Since it is not ascertained as having any partiality and does not fall to any extreme, it is the door of liberation of emptiness. Since it cannot be indicated by words, analogies, or referents, it is the door of liberation of signlessness. Since liberation is achieved by way of confidence in yourself, and since there is not the slightest desire for liberation resulting from anything else, it is the door of liberation of desirelessness.

(4) Here there are four subdivisions:

(a) As for the five kāyas, all phenomena [dharmas] of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are naturally present in the sugatagarbha, so [385] it is called *dharma*. Since phenomena are assembled or aggregated, without being mixed together in terms of appearances, it is called *kāya*.⁷⁸ Since the spontaneously actualized kāyas and displays of primordial consciousness are naturally *perfected as enjoyments*, it is called the *saṃbhogakāya*.⁷⁹ Since it is *variously emanated* as nothing other than itself and is naturally present, it is called the *nirmāṇakāya*.⁸⁰ Since the three kāyas are in *essence* of one taste and are *naturally* present, it is called the *svabhāvikakāya*.⁸¹ Since it does not move or change in the three times, it is *immutable*. It is invulnerable to all mental afflictions and habitual propensities. It is indestructible by all objects and circumstances. Since it is originally pure by its own essential nature, it is real. Since it cannot be contaminated by faults or virtues or by anything good or bad, it is incorruptible. Since it does not move or change in the three times, it is stable. Since it can penetrate everything, including even subtle cognitive obscurations, it is unobstructable. Since it cannot be transformed by anything, it is invincible. Since it is imbued with these seven qualities, it is a *vajra*. Since all the facets of primordial consciousness and sublime qualities are naturally perfected, it is a *kāya*.⁸²

(b) As for the five buddha families, the originally pure ground of being is the buddha family. The ground of being is unconquerable and indestructible, so it is the vajra family. In the ground of being, primordial consciousness is perfect, so it is the jewel family. [386] The great bliss of the ground of being is the lotus family. The spontaneously actualized perfection of the ground of being is the karma family.

(c) As for the five facets of primordial consciousness, the essential nature of the ground, all-pervasive emptiness, is the primordial consciousness of the absolute space of phenomena. Its self-illuminating nature is mirror-like primordial consciousness. The purity and equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is the primordial consciousness of equality. The unimpeded luminosity of the qualities of primordial consciousness is discerning primordial consciousness. Original, primordial freedom is the primordial consciousness of accomplishment.

(d) As for the five ḍākinīs, the emptiness of the absolute space of the ground is the buddha ḍākinī. The freedom from faults is the vajra ḍākinī. The spontaneous actualization of sublime qualities is the jewel ḍākinī. The freedom from attachment is the lotus ḍākinī. The spontaneous actualization of perfection is the karma ḍākinī. Their natural perfection in the ground itself is the real

characteristic of the ultimate ground of being. By gradually realizing this nature of existence in accordance with your faculties, as described previously, and familiarizing yourself with this path of practice without reliance upon anything else, liberation is actualized in this lifetime or in the intermediate period.

B''' The Context of Skillful Means and Wisdom

This section has three parts: (1''') the context of skillful means, (2''') the context of wisdom, and (3''') their purpose and the presentation of them.

1''' The Context of Skillful Means

the five buddhafiels, the five male deities, the five female consorts, the Three Jewels, the Three Roots, the classes, maṇḍalas, empowerments, and worship, as the essential nature of mahāyoga. [387]

These relative, effortful paths are taught for the sake of those who do not fathom the ultimate, effortless path, or who have no confidence in it even if they do fathom it. In accordance with the basis of saṃsāra, which is to be purified, the purifiers are **the five buddhafiels**, the five kāyas with their faces, hands, and marks, the five buddha families, **the five male deities, the five female consorts, the Three Jewels, the Three Roots,**⁸³ **the** pacifying, enriching, powerful, and wrathful **classes** [of deities] and **maṇḍalas**, the four **empowerments, worship, accomplishment, applications of the activities, and so on.** All such presentations of the path of secret mantra *mahāyoga* are evaluated and established merely as aspects of the ground sugatagarbha. So the sugatagarbha is **spontaneously actualized as the essential nature of** all the paths of **mahāyoga.**

2''' The Context of Wisdom

The five displays inside the body, the purification, transmutation, igniting, and descent of the channels, vital energies, and bindus, together with the empowerments and four blisses, are all spontaneously actualized emanations of the sugatagarbha.

The **displays inside** the city of **the body**, or the vajra aggregate — including the **five** cakras of channels, the three stationary **channels**, including the *avadhūti*, *lalanā*, and *rasanā*, the moving **vital energies**, and the displays of the **bindus** of bodhicitta — are **purified** and **transmuted** by the paths of skillful means of vase breathing, *adhisāra*, [388] the **igniting and descent** of *caṇḍālī*, the four **empowerments**, and the paths, **together with the four blisses**. Although none of them are established as ultimately real, for practical reasons they **are emanated** and presented as **spontaneously actualized** qualities of the **sugatagarbha**. So this is also the essential nature of all the paths of secret mantra *anuyoga*.

3''' Their Purpose and Their Presentation

In short, the dharmakāya, absolute space devoid of signs, is bound with names, modes, and signs in accordance with the ways of saṃsāra.

In order to guide disciples who grasp at permanence and to counteract six kinds of craving, visualizing, purity, and emptiness serve as remedies.

In short, the dharmakāya, absolute space devoid of signs, in accordance with the ways of saṃsāra, is bound with names, modes, and signs, including the directions, buddhafi elds, male deities, female consorts, and attendants, together with their circle of spiritual sons. Teachings about them as if they actually existed are in order to guide disciples who reify and grasp at the permanence of the physical world and its sentient inhabitants, and they counteract six kinds of craving for places, self, others, clothing, ornaments, and seats. Visualizing aspects of deities, recalling purity, and the emptiness of inherent nature of appearing phenomena serve as remedies for the impure, delusive appearances of saṃsāra. These are cases of signs being used to counteract signs, just as the pain of fire causes you to avoid getting burned. Those impure, delusive appearances are then transformed into displays of pure deities of primordial consciousness, [389] and by stabilizing them, liberation is achieved as a saṃbhogakāya in the intermediate period.

C''' The Summary

Therefore, those relative, artificial Dharmas of all the yānas are emanated from and reabsorbed into the sugatagarbha, like rivers that emerge from and return to the ocean. So it is known as the ground Great Perfection.

Therefore, out of temporary necessity, the teachings on the **relative, artificial Dharmas** of the stage of generation and the presentations of the path of the stage of completion — as well as the whole inconceivable range **of yānas** — **are** initially **emanated from the sugatagarbha** and finally are **reabsorbed** by identifying their nature and directly experiencing confidence in it. This is **like** all the **rivers** of the world first **emerging from the great ocean** and finally **returning to** it. In summary, even when the delusive appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra have withdrawn into the ethically neutral ground, all the displays of the kāyas, facets of primordial consciousness, and sublime qualities are self-emergent and perfectly present within that inner glow, without becoming nonexistent. **So it is known** among all scholars and adepts **as the ground Great Perfection**.

ii" The Path Great Perfection of Realization

This section has two parts: (A'') the perfection of the presentations of the yānas up to anuyoga in the path of the Great Perfection and [390] (B'') unmistakable teachings on the path of the Great Perfection itself.

A''' The Perfection of the Presentations of the Yānas up to Anuyoga in the Path of the Great Perfection

This section has two parts: (1''') the elaborate explanation and (2''') the summary.

1''' The Elaborate Explanation

Regarding tīrthikas, who seek a path while clinging to the extremes of eternalism and nihilism;

those who [wander] in saṃsāra by deluding their mindstreams with clinging to and reifying appearances and the mind;

śrāvakas, who take personal identitylessness as the path;

pratyekabuddhas, whose path apprehends emptiness and the links of

dependent origination in forward and reverse order;
Cittamātrins, who view the world of appearances as the mind;
Mādhyamikas, who apprehend all phenomena as empty;
followers of kriyā, who primarily emphasize hygiene and cling to realms;
followers of upāya, who integrate the higher and lower views and conduct;
followers of yoga, who regard the samayasattva and jñānasattva as
autonomously different;
followers of mahāyoga, who mistakenly view objects as autonomously real;
and
the path of anuyoga, in which there is the pretense of actualizing the cause
and fruition of absolute space and primordial consciousness —

With the actualization of the dharmakāya, pristine awareness that is present in the ground, since ultimate reality does not fall to the extreme of eternalism or nihilism, this perfects the minds of **tīrthikas, who seek a path while clinging to the extremes of eternalism and nihilism**. By letting the mind and appearances rest in their own state without modification, this perfects the **minds** and appearances of ordinary sentient beings, **who cling to and reify appearances and the mind** and whose **deluded mindstreams** consequently wander in **saṃsāra**. By directly, effortlessly seeing the reality of identitylessness, this perfects the **Śrāvakayāna**, in which **personal identitylessness is taken as the path**. By realizing all appearances and mindsets as being of the nature of dependently related events, this perfects the **Pratyekabuddhayāna**, by which you primarily **apprehend the links of dependent origination in forward and reverse order** and the sheer luminosity and **emptiness** of the mind. By decisively understanding all appearances as being none other than the mind, this perfects the **Cittamātrayāna**, by which you **view the world of appearances as the mind**. By realizing the meaning of both kinds of identitylessness, this perfects the **Madhyamakayāna**, by which you [391] **apprehend all phenomena as empty**. By realizing emptiness, which purifies causes and conditions, this perfects the **Kriyāyāna**, which **primarily emphasizes** practices of purification and **hygiene** in terms of the view and conduct, **and which clings** to the substantial existence of pure deities who dwell in external **realms**. By realizing the perfect nature of the nonduality of the view and conduct, this perfects the **Upāyayāna**, which **integrates the higher and lower views and conduct**. By realizing the primacy of the view, this perfects the **Yogayāna**, by which you **regard** yourself, as the **samayasattva**, and the deity, as the

jñānasattva, as autonomously different. By realizing the nonduality of the deity and your own mind, this perfects the **Mahāyogayāna**, by which you **mistakenly view** pure deities and buddhafiels as **objects** existing with their own characteristics and **as autonomously real**. By realizing the nondual nature of absolute space and primordial consciousness, this perfects the **Anuyogayāna**, **in which you** purify the **causal** impure channels, bindus, and vital energies as pure displays of **absolute space**, resulting in the **pretense of actualizing the fruition of primordial consciousness**.

Moreover, by realizing the absence of waxing and waning and of movement and change in ultimate reality, the view of eternalism is perfected, and by realizing it as baseless and rootless, the view of nihilism is perfected. Since the mind has no referent object and is without modification or alteration, as in the case of ordinary people, this perfects their appearances. All the qualities of the paths and fruitions from the Śrāvākayāna Vaibhāṣika up to anuyoga [392] are simultaneously perfected in the manifestation of the dharmakāya, pristine awareness that is present in the ground, so this is established as the perfection of the qualities of the paths and fruitions of all the yānas. The reason is that regardless of the yāna that you first enter, the ultimate fruition cannot be achieved without devoting yourself to the path of the Great Perfection. So all the qualities of those paths and fruitions are encompassed within the path of the Great Perfection, with the higher incorporating the lower.

2''' The Summary

all the grounds, paths, meditative experiences, and realizations of those [yānas]

are spontaneously actualized facets of the Great Perfection.

Like regarding water taken from the ocean as the entire ocean,

all yānas are seen as deficient by those who realize the meaning of this.

Therefore, **all** the qualities of **the causal grounds and paths** and resultant **meditative experiences and realizations of those** yānas are presented in accordance with the temperaments and capacities of disciples so that they may reach the ultimate path. They **are** each regarded as **facets**, or aspects, of the **spontaneously actualized** clear light **of** the nature of existence, **the Great Perfection**; they merely claim to be the complete path for achieving

buddhahood. This is **like taking** a drop of **water from the ocean** to slake your thirst and **regarding** it as **the entire ocean**. Therefore, if they are evaluated by **those who truly realize the meaning of this** Great Perfection, **all** the **yānas** from anuyoga on down [393] are seen to be obscured by strenuously abandoning and remedying things, due to failing to see the meaning of innate, natural liberation. So they are **seen as deficient**.

B''' Unmistaken Teachings on the Path of the Great Perfection Itself

In the absolute space of pristine awareness, which is actualized by wisdom and primordial consciousness, the Buddha Samantabhadra, who is free of relinquishment and attainment, is the Great Perfection — the essential nature of saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path.

Therefore, this is renowned as the path Great Perfection.

In the absolute space of pristine awareness, which is actualized by the essential nature, wisdom, and its creative power, great primordial consciousness, the original Buddha Samantabhadra, who is free of relinquishment of faults that were there before and of the fresh attainment of qualities that were not there before, is the unmistakable essential nature of saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path. Since this is the authentic perception of the nature of existence of the Great Perfection, it is universally renowned as the path Great Perfection.

iii'' The Fruitional Great Perfection of Actualization

This section has two parts: (A''') the actual fruition and (B''') how it is free of the two extremes.

A''' The Actual Fruition

All the causal yānas that have the pretense of being the ground of the fruition are actualized as the sugatagarbha, Samantabhadra.

**Appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra are naturally liberated, without abandoning them,
as kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness — this is the authentic teaching of all the jinas.
All pretentious claims regarding other fruitions are wearisome.
Therefore, all this is the fruition of all Dharmas —
the spontaneous actualization of the fruitional Great Perfection.**

Although there are pretentious claims that all bodhisattvas who enter **the causal yānas** of philosophical investigation accumulate merit and knowledge and purify obscurations for three countless eons and so on, finally culminating in the fruitional achievement of omniscience, the *Cloud of Dharma of the Tenth Ground* states, “The tathāgata **ground** of total illumination is not achieved.” [394] This is because the habitual propensities of movements of the three appearances⁸⁴ have not been abandoned.

In this phase, first you identify the nature of existence of pristine awareness, **the sugatagarbha**; then you acquire confidence in this; and finally you truly **actualize** it. By so doing, either in this lifetime or in the intermediate period, the supreme state of **Samantabhadra**, the primordial protector, is achieved. This is a distinctive characteristic of this path. Like ice melting into water, all **appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra are naturally liberated, without abandoning them, as kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness. This is established as the authentic teaching of all the jinas. All other pretentious claims regarding** beings migrating from one life to another and eventually achieving a dualistic **fruition** [with something to achieve and someone who achieves it] **are wearisome.** Not only is it simply exhausting, but it is impossible for enlightenment to ever be its result. **Therefore**, pristine awareness, the sugatagarbha, **is the ultimate fruition of all the Dharmas** of the path, and for this reason it is **the spontaneous actualization and completion of the fruitional Great Perfection.**

B''' How It Is Free of the Two Extremes

**Without falling to the extremes of mundane existence or peace,
the creative power of primordial consciousness that knows [reality as it is]
and perceives [the full range of phenomena] blazes forth.**

Apart from pristine awareness, the sugatagarbha, which is free of both kinds of obscurations⁸⁵ together with their habitual propensities, [395] any other buddhahood is impossible. **Without falling to the extreme of mundane existence**, like ordinary sentient beings, and without falling to the extreme of **peace**, like śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, **the great creative power of primordial consciousness** that **knows** reality as it is **and** that **perceives** the full range of phenomena **blazes forth**. Having fulfilled your own goals, it eternally, all-pervasively, and spontaneously serves the needs of sentient beings with great, objectless compassion for as long as space remains, so others' goals are fulfilled as well.

B'' The Genesis of Conventional Names

**Although the genesis of names is not different,
for the sake of disciples, it is given conventional names.**

All the specific names in accordance with conventional, relative truth are none other than names for pristine awareness, the sugatagarbha, for all phenomena are not other than this, and the ultimate nature of existence transcends all expressions of speech and thought. Therefore, **although the genesis of conventional names**, the presentations of the grounds and paths, and so on, **is not** established as being **different, conventional names are** temporarily **given so that** [the sugatagarbha] may be indicated with names and words and **disciples** may realize it.

Here are five such designations of conventional names. First, regarding the secret mantra Vajrayāna, this path is called *secret* because it is imbued with two great secrets.⁸⁶ It is called *mantra* because it is the place of liberation of all the yānas. The dharmakāya, pristine awareness that is present in the ground, [396] is called *vajra*, for it is endowed with the seven vajra qualities. Since it is not modified or altered by saṃsāra or nirvāṇa, it is its own *yāna*.⁸⁷

Second, ultimate bodhicitta is the real *meaning*, the *sublimity* of all phenomena, *pure* of faults and stains; and since it *fully* comprehends all facets of primordial consciousness and sublime qualities and is equally liberated in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, it is the ultimate reality of the *mind*.⁸⁸

Third, the Great Perfection *perfects* the intended meanings of the nine yānas. It is the universal basis of all the yānas, so it is *great*.⁸⁹

Fourth, the sole bindu is called *bindu*, for it transcends the edges and corners of concepts, and it is called *sole*, for it is the one taste of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.⁹⁰

Fifth, the youthful vase kāya is called *youthful*, for it is free of birth, death, aging, and degeneration. It is called *vase*, for the periphery of spontaneous actualization is not breached. And it is called *kāya*, for it perfects the facets of primordial consciousness and sublime qualities.⁹¹ In these ways it is indicated with five names, for you must unmistakably realize that which is indicated, namely, the nature of existence of the sugatagarbha.

This concludes the summary of the fourth phase of the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*.

77. The *Enlightened View of Samantabhadra* completes this set of the eight extremes of conceptual elaboration with this final one: Because all the phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa arise distinctly and not merged together, it is free of the extreme of unity. See VS 536.

78. This etymologizes “dharmakāya” (Tib. *chos kyi sku*): dharma (*chos*) kāya (*sku*).

79. This etymologizes “saṃbhogakāya” (Tib. *longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*): enjoyments (*longs spyod*) perfected (*rdzogs pa*) kāya (*sku*).

80. This etymologizes “nirmāṇakāya” (Tib. *sprul pa'i sku*): variously emanated (*sprul pa*) kāya (*sku*).

81. This etymologizes “svabhāvikakāya” (Tib. *ngo bo nyid kyi sku*): essence, naturally (*ngo bo nyid*) kāya (*sku*).

82. This etymologizes “immutable vajrakāya” (Tib. *mi 'gyur rdo rje'i sku*): immutable (*mi 'gyur*) vajra (*rdo rje*) kāya (*sku*).

83. The Three Roots are the guru, the root of blessings; the personal deity (Tib. *yi dam*; Skt. *iṣṭādevatā*), the root of siddhis; and the ḍākinī, the root of enlightened activities.

84. Tib. *snang gsum*. The appearances of the apprehended object, the apprehending mind, and the body of a sentient being.

85. These are afflictive obscurations and cognitive obscurations, the first impeding the realization of nirvāṇa and the second impeding the realization of the perfect enlightenment of a buddha.

86. The first of these two secrets is that it is inconceivable, and the second is that it is the unsurpassed king of all yānas.

87. This etymologizes “secret mantra Vajrayāna” (Tib. *gsang sngags rdo rje'i theg pa*): secret (*gsang*) mantra (*sngags*) vajra (*rdo rje*) yāna (*theg pa*).

88. This etymologizes “ultimate bodhicitta” (Tib. *don dam byang chub kyi sems*): meaning (*don*) sublimity (*dam pa*), pure (*byang*), full (*chub*) mind (*sems*).

89. This etymologizes “Great Perfection” (Tib. *rdzogs pa chen po*): perfects (*rdzogs pa*) great (*chen po*).

90. This etymologizes “sole bindu” (Tib. *thig le nyag gcig*): bindu (*thig le*), sole (*nyag gcig*).

91. This etymologizes “youthful vase kāya” (Tib. *gzhon nu bum sku*): youthful (*gzhon nu*) vase (*bum*) kāya (*sku*).

Phase 5: Determining Secret Dualistic Grasping and Revealing the Way of Natural Liberation

C" The Process of Delusion in Impure Saṃsāra

This section has five parts: (1") inner dualistic grasping, (2") secret dualistic grasping, (3") how the three realms are not other than your own appearances, [397] (4") *rūdra*⁹² as the essential nature of dualistic grasping of saṃsāra, and (5") the wisdom of realizing the identitylessness of clinging to reality.

1" Inner Dualistic Grasping

This section has two parts: (a") the summary and (b") the elaborate explanation.

a" The Summary

**Thus, as for the emergence of impure appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra,
from the displays of great original purity,**

In reality the delusive appearances of saṃsāra are not established in the nature of existence, so without any divergence **from the displays of** the ground of being — **great original purity — impure appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra** adventitiously **emerge**. The *Secret Essence Tantra* (*Guhyagarbha Tantra*) states:

Amazing! From the sugatagarbha
are emanated one's own thoughts and actions.
Various bodies and enjoyments,
places, miseries, and so on,
are each grasped as "I" and "mine."
Bound by no one, there are no fetters,

nor is there anyone who is bound.
By grasping at thoughts as oneself,
one's bonds are deliberately tied in space.⁹³

b'' The Elaborate Explanation

This section has three parts: (i'') apprehended objects, (ii'') apprehending minds, and (iii'') how objects and minds transform and dissolve in an instant.

i'' Apprehended Objects

**subtle self-concepts obscure wisdom and primordial consciousness,
and due to the subsiding of the inner glow and radiance of the ground into
the womb,
the luminosity of its outer radiance, the ethically neutral substrate of
saṃsāra,
manifests from immaterial space,
and the consciousness of grasping at the “I” serves as the basis from which
appearances and mindsets emerge.**

In the beginning, **subtle self-concepts** adventitiously arise where there is no self, **obscuring** [398] the essential nature, **wisdom, and** its creative power, **primordial consciousness**. This causes the five kinds of **inner glow of the ground**, the five kāyas of the five **radiances**, and the five facets of primordial consciousness to **subside into the womb**. **Due to** that, all the appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra arise like dream appearances, and the five facets of primordial consciousness are obscured by ignorance, resulting in the **outer radiance** manifesting as the five lights. By reifying and clinging to the true existence of the inner elements,⁹⁴ to the vital core of the five elements,⁹⁵ and to the great elements,⁹⁶ they appear as the impure five elements and are called the *outer elements, derivative elements, or residual appearances*. From the creative power of these five bases of delusion arise conditioned consciousness⁹⁷ and the assemblies of mental afflictions. The essential nature of the **substrate**, which acts as the basis of all the delusive apparitions **of saṃsāra**, is **ethically neutral** — neither good nor bad — and it is a blank, unthinking vacuity, like immaterial space. This is the actual substrate, and it is the essential nature of the mental affliction of delusion. From this, the movement of the karmic energies of an eon

is the essential nature of envy, and **from the immaterial space** of the substrate **manifests the luminosity** that is the basis for the emergence of all thoughts. This consciousness is the substrate consciousness, and it is the essential nature of hatred. From this, **the coarse consciousness of grasping at the “I,”** thinking, “I am,” **serves as the basis** [399] **from which appearances and mindsets emerge.** This is afflictive mentation, and it is the essential nature of pride. As soon as it occurs, the self and all appearances emerge, and they are called *prior thoughts* and *apprehended objects*.

ii" Apprehending Minds

With mentation alone established as the basis from which appearances arise,
from the movements of the six kinds of conditioned consciousness
manifest indeterminate phenomena, like hallucinations.

As [afflictive mentation] becomes somewhat fortified, the principal mind, **mentation alone**, is aroused, and appearances emerge in the ground. With the fortification of their luminosity, it is **established as the basis from which appearances** suddenly **arise.** This nonconceptual mentation is the essential nature of the mental affliction of attachment. **From the** flamelike essential nature of the five poisons emerge arrays of afflictive thoughts like sparks. In dependence upon that mentation, the nature of the **six kinds of conditioned consciousness** of the five nonconceptual senses **moves**, and from the creative power of their movements **manifest indeterminate phenomena** such as visual forms, **like hallucinations** appearing to distorted vision. As conceptual mentation reifies names and their referents and closely adheres to them, they are called *subsequent thoughts* and *apprehending minds*.

iii" How Objects and Minds Transform and Dissolve in an Instant

Sporadically, like hair-tips moved by the wind,
due to the five energies that emanate, vacillate, differentiate, assemble, and
transform,
the impure eon is created, abides, and is destroyed and emptied.

None of the objects and agents that appear like this [400] move from one place to another. **Sporadically**, with no ability to sustain themselves, **like hair-tips moved by the wind**, they are impermanent from moment to moment, with the prior moments ceasing and the latter moments emerging. So recognize them simply as transformations. Moreover, the obscuring energy veils the eye of wisdom, and it freshly **emanates** appearances that were not there before. **Vacillating** energy manifests all kinds of indeterminate appearances; differentiating energy individually **differentiates** appearances and mindsets; assembling energy **assembles** the defilements of habitual tendencies; **and** transforming energy instantly **transforms** phenomena. **Due to the** functioning of these **five energies**, or subtle and coarse thoughts, **the impure eon** that did not exist previously **is** instantly, freshly **created, abides, and is destroyed and emptied**. However, you must know that this just cannot be fathomed, due to its being contaminated by other delusive causes.

2'' Secret Dualistic Grasping

The five sensory consciousnesses give rise to apprehended objects, which are apprehended by the roving thoughts of subtle mental consciousness.

In one day, countless subtle eons vanish.

Completely withdrawing into the domain of mentation, daytime appearances arise,

and with their complete withdrawal into the domain of the substrate, nighttime appearances arise.

When you fall asleep, an eon dissolves into the space of awareness.

This section shows that all appearances are adventitious appearances of consciousness. From visual consciousness to tactile consciousness, the nonconceptual **consciousnesses of the five senses** [401] **give rise to apprehended objects. They are apprehended by the roving thoughts of subtle**, conceptual **mental consciousness**, which arises as the mind, and this is closely held. The senses, including the visual sense, act as the basis for the emergence of visual forms and so on, and these arise as objects. Visual consciousness and [the other sensory consciousnesses] fully apprehend coarse forms and so on. The conceptual mind closely holds on to each subtle

phenomenon and becomes deluded. Through this temporal sequence mundane existence is compounded, and through the reverse sequence there is a collapse all the way to the peak of mundane existence.

Thus, **in one day, countless**, or manifold, **subtle eons** adventitiously form corresponding to the number of thoughts, and gradually **vanish**. Consequently, appearing objects and the subject who perceives them **completely withdraw into the domain of** nonconceptual **mentation**, so that **daytime appearances arise** uninterruptedly. Finally, due to the daytime appearances of objects and the subject who perceives them **completely withdrawing into the domain of the substrate, nighttime appearances arise**. So **when you fall asleep, an eon of daytime appearances suddenly dissolves** without a trace **into the vacuous space of awareness**.⁹⁸ After they have dispersed into that vacuity, the substrate consciousness and [402] mentation gradually arise, giving rise to nighttime appearances, or dream phenomena. Eventually they subside into the domain of mentation, leading to the emergence of new daytime appearances. This unmistakably reveals the culmination of the circumstances of conventional reality. The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* states:

The substrate consciousness is like an ocean.

The six apprehending modes of consciousness that arise from it are like waves.

In summary, to the deluded mind, the apprehender and the apprehended appear as utterly separate, but in reality they are asserted to be established merely by prior thoughts that are closely held by subsequent thoughts. This is the unsurpassed position of this yāna.

3" How the Three Realms Are Not Other than Your Own Appearances

**The substrate spontaneously actualizes the formless realm;
afflictive mentation, the form realm;
and mentation, the desire realm.**

Not even an atom of the three realms possibly exists out there.

The substrate, which was explained previously, **spontaneously actualizes** the four dimensions of **the formless realm**;⁹⁹ **afflictive mentation** spontaneously

actualizes the seventeen domains of **the form realm**;¹⁰⁰ and mentation spontaneously actualizes the six domains of existence in **the desire realm**, from the gods on down.¹⁰¹ By identifying each one and acquiring confidence in this, you authentically establish on the basis of authoritative treatises and reasoning that the phenomena of the realms of existence are merely freshly arising appearances, and **not even an atom of the three realms possibly exists out there.**

4" Rūdra as the Essential Nature of Dualistic Grasping of Saṃsāra

The rūdra of the view of self is the *matraṃkaḥ* of saṃsāra, your body is the desire realm, your speech is the form realm, and your mind abides as the four dimensions of the formless realm. Flesh, blood, warmth, breath, the white and red bindus, the space of awareness, the four elements, the sun, moon, and Rāhula are [thus] established. [403]

The rūdra of the view of self, entailing dualistic appearances, **is the basis and essential nature of all the phenomena of saṃsāra**, so it is called *matraṃkaḥ*. In accordance with relative truth, a child who devours his or her mother's corpse is called *matraṃ*, but this is not to be taken literally. What is meant here is that the impure physical world and its sentient inhabitants in saṃsāra freshly emerge from adventitious self-concepts. From the time that they obscure the nature of existence of the sugatagarbha, which is like a mother, so that it is hidden, all the domains of existence of saṃsāra **are dualistically established** as the mere aggregates, elements, and sense bases of rūdra. So **your body, rūdra, is the desire realm, your speech is the form realm, and your mind abides as the four dimensions of the formless realm.** Your **flesh** is earth, **blood** is water, **warmth** is fire, **breath** is air, **and** mind is space. Those are the **four elements.** **The white bindu is the moon, the red [bindu] is the sun, and the empty space of awareness is the planet Rāhula.** (Here two lines are merged in the commentary, so in order to easily distinguish them, I have commented on one sequence beginning with the reference to blood.) That is the way they **are established.** The substrate consciousness is Maheśvara, afflictive mentation is Gaṇeśa, and mentation is Kāmarāja.¹⁰²

This indicates [404] that all the assemblies of *mattas*¹⁰³ appear in dependence upon the three secret places of rūdra. To classify them, the physical worlds throughout space are the rūdra of the outer view of the self, which is remedied in the phase of the stage of generation by purifying these worlds as buddhafiels created from emanated light. Grasping at the inner habitations, enjoyments, and body is the rūdra of the inner view of the self, which is remedied by meditating on the palace and deities. The latent, unlimited, continuous consciousness of the appearance of the self, with the sense of “I” at all times and in every situation, is the rūdra of the secret view of the self, which is the thread running through all appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra. The remedy for this is to steadfastly maintain divine pride. If you are unaware of this essential point, however long you cultivate and recite the stage of generation, you will not become enlightened. So the worship and accomplishment¹⁰⁴ performed upon correctly realizing this point are the unmistakable tradition of the Secret Mantra[yāna].

5" The Wisdom of Realizing the Identitylessness of Clinging to Reality

Liberated by the power and blessings of the sharp vajra of conscious awareness of identitylessness in pure absolute space, the quintessences manifest as the kāyas and facets of great primordial consciousness.

Without abandoning saṃsāra, you are liberated as a buddha.

Without abandoning the view of the self, it is pacified as a display of spontaneous actualization.

The power and blessings of the actual Great Glorious One, Herukapa, the sharp vajra of conscious awareness that realizes all things as being of the nature of identitylessness, liberate the rūdra of the view of the self involving dualistic grasping [405] at the nature of identitylessness; and in the pure absolute space of spontaneous actualization, the quintessences manifest as the kāyas and facets of great primordial consciousness. Without abandoning saṃsāra, which seems to appear objectively, you are liberated as a buddha. Without abandoning the view of the self, which seems to appear as a subject, it is pacified as a display of the spontaneous actualization of the kāyas and

facets of primordial consciousness. The causal view of the self and all the appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra that it generates are nothing but concepts of a mistaken mind, like confusing a striped rope for a snake. Since they do not in fact exist, you realize that there is nothing to abandon, and you simultaneously actualize the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness that are present in the ground of being. Therefore, the accounts from the past of how the Great Glorious One liberated the rūdra are in accord with the ways of saṃsāra, such that the one who was liberated and the one who liberated are both presented as having physical form. That is merely how they appear to ordinary beings; however, from the perspective of the buddhas, you should know that it is like this.

This concludes the fifth phase of the *Sharp Vajra*, which reveals how natural liberation occurs.

92. Skt. *rūdra*. A meditator takes birth as a rūdra, a type of demon, by firmly and clearly visualizing himself or herself as a wrathful deity — while having no realization of emptiness and no motivation of compassion. It can also mean the conceptual grasping by which one reifies the distinctions of outer, inner, and secret phenomena.

93. Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro, trans., *The Guhyagarbha Tantra: Secret Essence Definitive Nature Just As It Is, with Commentary by Longchen Rabjam* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2011), 41.

94. The five inner elements are the mind, blood, flesh, warmth, and breath.

95. The five elements are earth, water, fire, air, and space.

96. The five great elements are the five primary colors of white, blue, yellow, red, and green.

97. Tib. *rnam shes*; Skt. *viññāna*. This term is normally translated simply as “consciousness,” but in the context of these Dzokchen teachings, it is clearly distinguished from primordial consciousness and is translated here as “conditioned consciousness,” for it is conditioned by dualistically grasping at the aspects (Tib. *rnam pa*) of subject and object.

98. Tib. *dbyings*; Skt. *dhātu*. While the Tibetan term *dbyings* is sometimes an abbreviation of *chos kyi dbyings*, or the absolute “space of phenomena,” as noted previously, it sometimes refers to the relative “space of awareness,” as it does here. Throughout these translations, the term *space of awareness* may be regarded as identical to the term *element of phenomena* (Tib. *chos kyi khams*; Skt. *dharmadhātu*), which denotes the range of phenomena that can be perceived by the mind and is one of the eighteen elements (Tib. *khams*; Skt. *dhātu*) commonly cited in Buddhist phenomenology.

99. The four dimensions of the formless realm are boundless space, boundless consciousness, nothingness, and neither discernment nor nondiscernment.

100. See *form realm* in glossary.

101. The desire realm comprises the six domains of the gods, asuras, humans, animals, pretas, and the hell beings.

102. Tib. *’dod pa’i rgyal po*. Also called Takkirāja, the “King of Desire.”

103. Tib. *dregs pa*. Haughty nonhuman beings belonging to an eightfold class.

104. Tib. *bsnyen sgrub*; Skt. *sevāsādhana*. The two aspects of sādhana practice, particularly within the context of mahāyoga.

Phase 6: Teachings on the Essential Points of Practice and Their Key Distinctions

D" Prayers for Swiftly Realizing the Meaning of the Tantra and Experiencing Liberation

**Having established as your witness the ground of being, absolute space, as the true buddha,
by generating the power of pure prayers,
make a commitment to omniscient buddhahood. [406]**

It is asserted elsewhere that all roots of virtue, great and small, that are imbued with the wisdom of realizing the absence of true existence of the three spheres of an act¹⁰⁵ are causes of buddhahood. Accordingly, in this case **the ground of being, absolute space**, the ultimate mode of existence of all phenomena, is the sugatagarbha, and this is **the actual, true buddha**. Once you have truly realized this mode of being, it is best to rest in meditative equipoise in this actualization. Those who don't know how to do that should visualize the Three Roots and assemblies of peaceful and wrathful deities in the sky in front of them and **establish** them as **witnesses** for their prayers of supplication. In their presence, with reverent attention to the meaning of the tantras and expressing this in words — without a selfish attitude or idle babbling — with **pure** speech, **generate the power of prayers** that unprecedented qualities of experience and realization may freshly arise and that those that have begun to arise may increase. This **makes a commitment**, or plants a seed, for proceeding **to the** state of **omniscient buddhahood**, which ensures that enlightenment will finally be realized. Between sessions, [407] you should offer this prayer uninterruptedly as you go about your affairs.

E" Devotion to the Pith Instructions for the Moment of Death and So Forth If You Have Not Earnestly Devoted

Yourselſ to the Tenet System in This Lifetime

At all times supremely cherish the practice of the essential points of the pith instructions on practicing for death and on immersion and withdrawal.

Those who are able to become liberated through the great transference as a limpid rainbow body in this lifetime by the swift path of cutting through to original purity and direct crossing over to spontaneous actualization do not need this. However, for those who have not devoted themselves to such a system, there are instructions for the dying process on merging with the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness by entering into the clear light, or purification by way of instructions for transferring your abode to a [pure] environment and dwelling.

First, while resting in the reclining lion posture,¹⁰⁶ direct your consciousness to your eyes. Direct your gaze into space and to pristine awareness, and from the nature of original purity, free of dispersal and withdrawal, by renouncing the requisites of living, you will be liberated in an instant. Second, when your final breath is expelled, imagine a white A, of the nature of pristine awareness, at your heart, and imagine that it ascends far above the crown of your head. In that instant, by reciting *Hig* twenty-one times in a row, you will be liberated. It is important that you start practicing this now, so that **at all times** between sessions [408] when the sky is clear you direct your awareness into space and think, “When it is certain that I am about to **die**, may I be liberated in the expanse free of conceptual elaboration!” As you do so, after you have exhaled, rest your consciousness without an object. Repeatedly **practicing** this and becoming familiar with it is a very swift path.

As for withdrawing phenomena into the vase, dividing the night into three periods, at dusk the **withdrawal** of the senses into the essential point while remaining in the ṛṣi posture¹⁰⁷ is as follows: Visualize at the navel a red, four-petaled lotus, upon which is a hot, red cone, with its flames extending upward through the avadhūti, striking a *Haṃ* syllable at the crown. Drops of bindus stoke the flames, which flare up, burning up karma and habitual propensities. Then rest in the nature of bliss and emptiness.

As for the **immersion** of sleep in the clear light, visualize in the center of your heart white A’s like a string of crystal beads.¹⁰⁸ Imagine that as a result of them dissolving into one another, the white space inside the avadhūti becomes

as bright as sunlight flooding a window. **Supremely cherish the practice of the extraordinary essential points of such pith instructions.**

*F'' Unique Teachings of the Great Perfection on Key Distinctions*¹⁰⁹

This section has two parts: (1'') cutting through misconceptions by hearing and thinking and [409] (2'') the need for practice after having cut through misconceptions.

1'' Cutting Through Misconceptions by Hearing and Thinking

The manifestation of the substrate as absolute space is the dharmakāya, Samantabhadra.

The manifestation of the absolute space of mental consciousness is great wisdom.

The manifestation of the ultimate nature of the mind is the supreme path of pristine awareness.

The manifestation of conditioned consciousness blazes forth as the creative power of primordial consciousness.

The manifestation of the essential nature of sentient beings is buddhahood itself.

The extinction of impure appearances and mindsets is actual liberation.

When understanding arrives at the ultimate nature, realization is certain.

There are six distinctions to be drawn: between (a'') the substrate and the dharmakāya, (b'') mentation and wisdom, (c'') the mind and pristine awareness, (d'') conditioned consciousness and primordial consciousness, (e'') liberation and delusion, and between (f'') understanding and realization.

a'' The Distinction between the Substrate and the Dharmakāya

The substrate is very subtle, entailing subtle grasping at the “I” that does not lend itself to analysis; and once it has arisen, it is ignorance, which is like

darkness. The original, primordial ground of being is like space. When they are united, there is a blank vacuity devoid of mindfulness, like that of deep sleep and fainting. This is the actual substrate. By meditating while letting the substrate consciousness, which is temporarily luminous, vividly rest in the nature of that vacuity, the assemblies of roving thoughts cease, causing a radiant vacuity to appear.

Second, as for the dharmakāya, **the manifestation of the two types of substrate¹¹⁰ as absolute space**, without letting them slip into an ethically neutral state, **is the dharmakāya, Samantabhadra**. This is not a blank, immaterial void, but by naturally letting it rest without modification, you are self-liberated. It is self-illuminated by great wisdom, [410] the creative power of its radiance is unimpeded, and without entering into objects, it is the causal dharmakāya. Being unmodified, by way of its own natural limpidity as self-emergent absolute space, devoid of a center and periphery, it is uniformly pervasive as great nonduality, illuminating the depths of great primordial consciousness that knows [reality as it is] and perceives [the full range of phenomena]. This manifestation of all the qualities of enlightenment is the fruitional dharmakāya. The first [causal dharmakāya] is taken as the path by knowing the essential nature of reality, while the second [fruitional dharmakāya] incinerates them both with the great fruition,¹¹¹ so that they limitlessly pervade reality.¹¹²

b'' The Distinction between Mentation and Wisdom

Mentation emerges due to the substrate's obscuration of the radiance and creative power of wisdom, and it is the grasping that is the basis for misapprehending the self-knowing existence of all appearances and mindsets. Its creative power, or conceptual mentation, is the recognition of all learned and unlearned activities and the grasping at them.

As for the latter, **the manifestation of the absolute space of mental consciousness is great wisdom**. In this regard there are manifest wisdom and path wisdom. The former truly knows and actualizes the nature of existence of ultimate reality, or suchness. [411] The latter rests consciousness in its own nature, wide-open and naked, and indefinable, without being modified by the intellect, mentation, or concepts. Thus, its essential nature is empty, its manifest nature is luminous, and its compassion is naturally liberated and unimpeded, without entering into objects. By becoming familiar with it, the words and

meanings that flow out of this expanse are its creative expressions. If arrogance arises on that basis and clinging occurs, wisdom is obscured, turning you away from the path. This is like being on the verge of acquiring great wealth but then losing it to a thief. Therefore, when inconceivable sublime qualities flow out of the expanse, it is important to know the vital point of not going astray. Mentation is the basis of the mind, and the vital point is not to embrace modifications, rejection and acceptance, or experiences involving craving as your path. Wisdom is not doing anything at all. This is the authentic path, so it is the most important thing to know.¹¹³

c" The Distinction between the Mind and Pristine Awareness

First of all, the mind is the essential nature of saṃsāra, its cause is ignorance, its illusory apparitions are appearances, its creative expressions are thoughts, and its displays are relative truths. As for its divisions, there are two types of mind: the deluded mind and the mind that seeks the path. The first refers to the minds of all sentient beings [412] who cycle about in delusion. The second refers to the minds of all those who wish to enter the authentic path and who take the mind as their path. As for its cause, since it is generated by the ground of saṃsāra, its results are also confined solely to saṃsāra, so it is a relative truth.

The **manifestation** of the absolute space **of the ultimate nature of the mind** by **pristine awareness** is mastered by great wisdom. At this time, its ground is the dharmakāya, its radiance is wisdom, and its creative expressions are none other than the displays of primordial consciousness. Since the three kāyas are generated by the spontaneously actualized ground, all views and meditations are solely the results of omniscience, so this **is the authentic, supreme path**.

Second, there are two types of pristine awareness: causal pristine awareness and fruitional pristine awareness. The former is mastered by great, wide-open wisdom, which naturally settles and dissolves without modification into the essential nature of reality, which is all-pervasive and devoid of a center and periphery. Its radiance consists of unimpeded creative displays that are uninfluenced by objective conditions and unmixed with objects. Although beginners may identify it, they oscillate between achieving stillness and then falling back into delusion due to forgetfulness. Their abiding in these alternating states indicates the subliminal presence of subtle grasping with effortful intellect and mentation. This shows that they have merely entered the path; however,

because they have not achieved stability [413] and are inconsistent, it is the stage of having merely recognized the path.

By the power of increasing this through familiarization, during the waking state they are released into the infinite expanse of the nature of existence, without oscillating between stillness and delusion.

In the dream state, in contrast, sometimes such people are under the influence of stillness, while at other times they become lost in delusion. This is the phase when they have just reached the path, so this is pristine awareness of reaching the path.

Due to increasing familiarization with this, pristine awareness never loses its own power at any time during the dream state or the waking state, and this is called expansive pristine awareness. When at all times and in all situations there are no digressions from the great clear light of pristine awareness — like the absence of darkness once the sun has risen — pristine awareness has manifested, whereby all subtle and coarse modes of apprehension of the view and meditation dissolve right where they are, and no defilements of the mind arise. This is pristine awareness in which confidence is acquired.

The fact that the sublime qualities of the domain of the sugatagarbha have still not manifested is a sign that you have not yet transcended the obscurations of the substrate, so this is causal pristine awareness. It is analogous to the break of dawn before the sun has risen. By practicing with enormous, unflagging enthusiasm, [414] causal pristine awareness is awakened in the absolute space of the great fruition. Entering the womb of the dharmakāya, which is devoid of signs, it limitlessly manifests as displays of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness. This fruitional pristine awareness is more potent, just as the light of dawn is paled by the sunlight once the sun has risen. In the first phase, pristine awareness is identified, but you have not transcended saṃsāra by even a hair's breadth, so this is established as the cause.

In general, the reason this is called the *fruitional yāna* is that — unlike devoting yourself in the present to practicing causal virtues of the body, speech, and mind with the pretense that you will achieve the fruition of buddhahood in the future — here you take ultimate reality itself as the path, familiarize yourself with it, and thereby gain liberation right where you are. Hence, since no fruition is achieved apart from this, it is said to be the fruitional yāna.¹¹⁴

d'' The Distinction between Conditioned Consciousness

and Primordial Consciousness

First, once the eye of wisdom has been veiled, [conditioned consciousness] has the nature of realizing and investigating the configurations that emerge from the substrate and proliferate as discrete entities, arising and passing away, as that which structures saṃsāra.

Second, when the absolute space of **conditioned consciousness manifests**, although it seems as if it **blazes forth as the creative power of primordial consciousness** that was not there before, in reality this simply manifests due to familiarity [415] with the realization that it was always self-appearing.

Finally, when the impurities of ignorance are cleansed in absolute space and conditioned consciousness dissolves into the ground of being, all the specific aspects of the grounds and paths up to the facets of primordial consciousness and sublime qualities of buddhahood are magnificently present as self-emergent and self-arising, unlike the transient intellect, mentation, and concepts that arise and pass one after the other. This is primordial consciousness that perceives the full range of phenomena.

Path primordial consciousness is simply the unimpeded array of appearances that arises when it is freed from the obscuring veils of the substrate. In short, when primordial consciousness subsides into its inner glow, its radiance constitutes appearances and its creative power constitutes conditioned consciousness.

e" The Distinction between Deluded Sentient Beings and Liberated Buddhas

First, deluded sentient beings perceive the physical world and its sentient inhabitants along with self and others, and then by clinging to them, wander about and cycle in the six realms of existence.

Second, buddhahood itself is the manifestation of your own face as the essential nature of sentient beings, the sugatagarbha. With the extinction of impure appearances and mindsets, together with their habitual propensities, there is actual liberation. Its nature is uniform pervasiveness, free of transition and change, without falling into any partiality, transcending all extremes, [416] limitlessly expanding as displays of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness, transcending objects, not being established as the teacher and his circle of disciples, transcending the body, and not falling to the extremes of self

and others. You must know that in the nature of great bliss of the absolute space of phenomena, the actualization of the inner glow of uniformly pervasive wisdom does not fall to the extreme of bearing signs. As the *Diamond-Cutter Sūtra* (*Vajracchedikā Sūtra*) states:

Those who see me as form
and who know me as sound
have entered a false path:
those people do not see me.
The buddhas view ultimate reality,
and the guides are the dharmakāya.
Ultimate reality is not an object of knowledge,
so it cannot be known with conditioned consciousness.

f'' The Distinction between Understanding and Realization

First, understanding merely as intellectual investigation of the meaning of emptiness, understanding grasping at emptiness as being emptiness, and the view that actions and their consequences and so forth lack even relative existence constitute understanding that is mistaken or false. Authentic understanding determines the nature of all appearances as lacking true existence, so identitylessness is like a hallucination and the lack of true existence is like a dream. After you have utterly fathomed nonobjectivity as the panoramic sweep of space, the phase of naturally remaining at all times and in all circumstances [417] without contrivance in the nature of not grasping at true existence is merely the initial stage of understanding arising in your mindstream.

Second, **when understanding arrives at the ultimate nature, realization is certain.** This occurs when all dualistic phenomena insubstantially arise like mirages, without grasping at them, as if they were hallucinations. This is the phase of appearances arising as illusions. At all times and in all circumstances, pristine awareness remains within its own domain and is not mistaken for the mind. It is unmodified by the intellect, mentation, and concepts, so just as there is no grasping at true existence when you recognize the dream as a dream, reification dissolves right where it is. The culmination of realization and familiarization is the limitless expansion into perfect displays in an expanse that

is totally subsumed within the absolute space of phenomena.¹¹⁵

To summarize the first three distinctions, when great wisdom manifests without succumbing to an ethically neutral dispersal into delusion, you see that the essential nature is the dharmakāya, its radiance is wisdom, its creative expressions are the facets of primordial consciousness, and its displays are ultimate. When great wisdom is obscured by ignorance, the essential nature is the substrate, its radiance is mentation, its creative expressions are the mental factors, and its displays are relative.

2" The Need for Practice after Having Cut Through Misconceptions

**After making such distinctions, so that you are not confused regarding the essential points,
it is supremely important to focus your practice on these essential points.**
[418]

The importance of first cutting through misconceptions by means of hearing and thinking and then gaining **unconfused** knowledge **regarding the essential points of the distinctions** is stated in the *Sublime Continuum* (Uttaratantra):

Wisdom is supreme and its basis
is hearing, so hearing is also supreme.

Mere intellectual knowledge is not enough, so until liberation is actualized, without letting your recognition slip into an ethically neutral state, **it is supremely important to practice and focus on these essential points** day and night, without falling into lassitude. This was emphasized by the Omniscient Lord of Dharma:

Although you have recognized your own nature, if you do not familiarize
yourself with it,
you will be carried away by conceptual enemies, and you will be like a child
caught up in battle.

Maitreya, Regent of the Jina, stated, “If one could realize the meaning without hearing teachings, the teachings by the buddhas would be pointless. If one could

realize the meaning without meditating, the meditations by yogins would be pointless.” In accordance with these words, the union of realization and familiarization is the defining characteristic of the authentic path.

This concludes the sixth phase of the *Sharp Vajra*. Up to this point, [419] I have elaborately explained the path of cutting through to original purity.

The Closing Summary of Those Explanations

Thus, with the wisdom of truly realizing the nature of being of the Great Perfection through actualizing the nature of existence, focus on unifying your view, meditation, and conduct.

Thus, with the wisdom of truly realizing the nature of being of the Great Perfection of the path by directly perceiving **the nature of existence** of the original ground, come to the culmination of the investigation of reality. Direct perception by means of all-seeing great wisdom is the **view**. Never parting from the self-mastery of the great natural liberation of pristine awareness is **meditation**. And the essential points regarding conduct are first not to let your **conduct** fall into error due to the view. Abandon inappropriate, nonvirtuous thoughts and deeds as if they were poison, and behave in a calm, subdued, and conscientious manner, as if you had come into the presence of a judge of the highest court. Additionally, do not let your view fall into error due to your conduct. That is, by unmistakably recognizing that abiding in the ultimate, effortless nature of existence is the path of the perfectly awakened buddhas, do not let this be overshadowed by any relative, effortful virtues. You must be like a lion posing majestically in the snow.

By **focusing on** the practice of this view, meditation, and conduct in a **unified** way, without letting them become disconnected from each other, three levels of dreams will arise. [420] The highest level occurs when your dreams are purified in the clear light, merging with their surroundings, whereby enlightenment is achieved as the dharmakāya. The middling level occurs once you have recognized dreams as dreams and are able to emanate and transform them, whereby the relief [of liberation] is achieved as a nirmāṇakāya. The lowest level occurs when evil dreams resulting from negative habitual propensities cease, and you have only good dreams. When this occurs, it is certain you will achieve the relief [of liberation] as a living-being

nirmāṇakāya.¹¹⁶ Moreover, a sign of such conduct is that you abide solely in inactivity, without engaging in any activities pertaining to the eight mundane concerns.

105. The three spheres of an act are the agent, action, and object of the action.

106. In the lion posture, lie on your right side, with your cheek resting on your right hand and the left hand resting on your thigh. Your left leg is straight, while your right leg is slightly bent.

107. In the ṛṣi posture, rest the soles of both feet on the ground, press your ankles together in parallel, and sit in a squatting position. Your spine is vertical and your neck is completely straight. With your hands clasped together, embrace your armpits or your knees.

108. You actually visualize twenty-one A syllables with the bottom one at your heart and the top one at your forehead as you are lying down. As you fall asleep you imagine the A's dissolving one into the other from your forehead down to your heart until there is just one left in the avadhūti inside your heart.

109. Tib. *'phyongs*.

110. The two types of substrate are the actual substrate and the temporarily luminous substrate. See p. 52n63.

111. The great fruition is here said to “incinerate,” in the sense of “transcend,” both categories of the causal and the fruitional dharmakāya.

112. This paragraph compares with VS 564.

113. These two paragraphs compare with VS 564–65.

114. This section compares with VS 566–70.

115. This paragraph compares with VS 572–73.

116. Tib. *skye ba sprul pa'i sku*. This is one of four kinds of nirmāṇakāyas, the other three being teacher nirmāṇakāyas, created nirmāṇakāyas, and material nirmāṇakāyas. See GD 217–18.

Phase 7: How to Follow the Path of the Great Clear Light, Direct Crossing Over

b. The Path of Direct Crossing Over to Spontaneous Actualization

THIS SECTION has two parts: (i) the summary and (ii) the elaborate explanation.

i. The Summary

Liberation is swiftly achieved by devoting yourself to the pinnacle of paths, the swift path, the essential Dharma, filled with blessings of clairvoyance, extrasensory perception, and miraculous power, the path of direct crossing over to the city of the great transference.

The pinnacle of all the paths of the nine stages, superior even to the path of cutting through, the swift path, the vajra essence Dharma, filled with blessings of clairvoyance, extrasensory perception, and miraculous power, is the path of the clear light, direct crossing over to the city of the great transference rainbow body. In the phase of cutting through, by identifying pristine awareness, the dharmakāya that is present in the ground, and devoting yourself to achieving some stability in it, you will certainly achieve supreme liberation swiftly, which is to say either in this life or in the intermediate period.

ii. The Elaborate Explanation

This section has two parts: [421] (A') the general meaning and (B') the meaning of the text.

A' The General Meaning

This section has two parts: (1') the special preliminary practices and (2') how to engage in the main practice.

1' The Special Preliminary Practices

If you do not practice the profound preliminary rituals, when you engage in the main practice there will be a great many obstacles and pitfalls, so first of all diligently apply yourself to differentiating saṃsāra and nirvāṇa¹¹⁷ with respect to your body, speech, and mind. The ways of differentiating them in terms of outer, inner, and secret are to be understood from the meditation manuals (such as the *Vajra Essence*),¹¹⁸ and they should be practiced accordingly.

2' How to Engage in the Main Practice

This section has seven parts: (a') a general synthesis of direct crossing over and so forth, (b') recognizing the principal points of this specific phase, (c') the vital points of the body, speech, and mind, (d') the three vital points for viewing the clear light, (e') a presentation of the lamps, (f') establishing the basis with the three kinds of stillness, and (g') how to put the stages into practice.¹¹⁹

a' A General Synthesis of Direct Crossing Over and So Forth

In this yāna our own explanation of the channels and bindus is called *ati anu*. To summarize it, the aperture for the manifest movements of the impure energy-mind is the mouth, and the apertures for the subtle energy-mind [422] are the nostrils. As for how they move, in the lungs, channels the width of a wheat straw are filled with the exhaled and inhaled energy. If they increase excessively, heat disorders arise; if they decrease, cold disorders occur; and if the energy flows straight, there is a balance of the heat and cold elements of the body. In one day there are 21,600 breaths, which serve as the mounts for the mind's discursive thoughts. Therefore, the strenuous control of the channels and vital energies is a profound method for forcefully binding the energy-mind, but there are great obstacles and ways to go astray.

The mouth is the aperture for the movements of coarse mental afflictions, while subtle, hidden afflictions move by way of the nostrils. The six lamps of the ground of the nature of existence are the avenues for the arising of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness, and they are also the apertures through which primordial consciousness manifests. The two ears are the pathways by which consciousness masters appearances, and they are also the apertures of subtle and hidden primordial consciousness. In dependence upon them, sounds are purified.

Through the apertures by which primordial consciousness manifests, the clear light that illuminates darkness is purified. The eyes are the entrances through which stainless appearances manifest, and the purification of dreams is the gateway for dreams. By familiarizing yourself with the clear light, emanation, and transformation, [423] the appearances in the transitional phase of becoming can be emanated and transformed. From that you can emanate a pristine *nirmāṇakāya* buddhafiield and familiarize yourself with transforming the appearances of the intermediate period.¹²⁰

b' Recognizing the Principal Points of This Specific Phase

Now I shall describe the specific points in the explanations of the types of apertures. With respect to the gateways through which the visions of *kāyas* and facets of primordial consciousness manifest, there are (i') the lamps of the ground of the nature of existence, and (ii') the lamps of the yogic path.

i' The Lamps of the Ground of the Nature of Existence

As for the three kinds of lamps of the vessel, the quintessence of the body is the *citta lamp of the flesh*, and inside it is the quintessence of the channels, the *hollow crystal kati channel*. It is one-eighth the width of a horsehair, with two branches that stem from inside the heart like the horns of a wild ox. These curve around the back of the ears and come to the pupils of the eyes. Their root is the heart, their trunk is the channels, and their fruit is the eyes. The quintessence of the apertures is called the *fluid distant lasso lamp*. Although these are said to have three names, they are united as one entity with mere distinctions of being the root, trunk, and fruit. Thus, in the context of the path, they are simply called the *fluid distant lasso lamp*.¹²¹

As for the ways in which the visions are perceived, the *pure fluid distant lasso lamp* is so called because it enables you to see the luminous visions of the root of light. The *impure fluid distant lasso lamp* is so called because delusive appearances are seen due to the basis of the sensory faculty. [424] As for its etymology, it is called *distant* because it enables you to see and apprehend from a distance forms, colors, and *kāyas* of pristine awareness, and because if you do realize the quintessential clear light, it propels you far from *saṃsāra*, while if you do not realize this, it propels you far from *nirvāṇa*. It is called a *lasso*

because it snares you if you identify with the appearances of saṃsāra, such as forms and sensory objects, and it also holds you to prevent your falling into distraction regarding the visions of light. It is called *fluid* because it separates the quintessence from the residue of appearances, and because it is free of self-grasping regarding appearances. It is called a *lamp* because it illuminates the delusive appearances to the sense doors, and it illuminates primordial consciousness, pristine awareness.¹²²

Among the three kinds of lamps of the vital essence, here is the nature of being of the first, called the *lamp of the pristine space of awareness*: The five lights result from the transmutation of the residues of the five elements into quintessences. The quintessence that appears as space is indigo or light blue; the quintessence that appears as water is white or gray; the quintessence that appears as fire is red or brown; the quintessence that appears as earth is yellow, pale yellow, or dark yellow; and the quintessence that appears as air is green, tan, or light green. [425] In whatever color the impure visions initially appear, when they shift to the space of awareness, they continue to appear in that same color.

Here is how the visions in the space of awareness are seen by individuals who are on the path: By forcefully directing your attention to the eyes and your eyes to a sky free of [contaminating] influences, you see vague, bluish visions in the space of awareness. If you intensely engage with this mode of appearance, you recognize that space is unrelated to any individual, but the lamp consistently emerges or recedes according to the presence or absence of the individual. So external, cloudless space is just the basis for appearances to arise, but it is not the actual space of awareness. The space of awareness is an inner space that illuminates the pavilions of rainbow lights. While it seems as if they emerge from it, they are not really different.

Such visions in the space of awareness are initially of the nature of the sun, the moon, a flame, and so on, complete with the five colors and filled with rainbow patterns, like brilliant, unfurled brocade. This rainbow weave appears in the aspect of vertical and horizontal visions. For just a month, beginners should gaze through a crystal [in the direction of] the sun during the daytime, at the moon during the nighttime, and gaze at a flame in the morning and evening. This veils the basis of appearances, so [the visions] appear. At first [426] they arise as shifting, quivering images, after a while they become more stable, and finally they remain motionless. At that time, look out a window into the clear sky and settle on these visions of light, whether they appear to be good or bad, and disengage from the flaws of enjoying or not enjoying their beauty or lack of

beauty. Then a whitish blue emerges that is not of the external empty sky. Even so, know that it is important to rest in this state without attraction or aversion to its qualities. As for its etymology, it is called the *space of awareness* because the space of awareness of the quintessences of the five elements appears as the five lights. Because it purifies reification, it is called *pristine*, and in dependence upon this, the visions of the vajra strands¹²³ are illuminated, so it is called a *lamp*.¹²⁴

As for the nature of being of the *lamp of empty bindus*, the five inner elements are transmuted into quintessences and thereby become the five quintessences. The quintessence of the mind is transformed into indigo and appears as such. The quintessence of blood transforms into the color red and appears as such. Likewise, the quintessence of flesh is yellow, the quintessence of warmth is white, and that of the breath appears green.¹²⁵ The five quintessences appear to be round, so they are called *bindus*. In reality, they are spherical, without corners. They appear like concentric circles rippling from a stone thrown into a pond.¹²⁶ [427] As for its etymology, the *Pearl Garland* states:

“*Thig*” refers to immutability;

“*le*” refers to pervasiveness and the appearance as objects.

Empty and devoid of signs of substantiality,
this *lamp* illuminates by dispelling darkness.¹²⁷

In the center of the heart is the *hollow crystal kati channel*, and inside it is the bindu of the internal space of awareness. By being held in your gaze, it appears externally as the bindu of the radiance of the space of awareness, so it is said to be twofold.

As for the nature of being of the *lamp of self-emergent wisdom*, it is pristine awareness, characterized by its empty essential nature, its luminous manifest nature, and its unimpeded compassion. This is primordial consciousness, the essential nature of the mind, which eternally abides inseparably from the sugatagarbha. As for its way of appearing, due to being held by the gaze of the distant lasso, inner pristine awareness is experienced as being very limpid and nonobjective. From this arises sharp and swift wisdom that knows objects and the meanings of words, arising as a flowing forth into the expanse, constituting its creative expressions. From them, *vajra strands* of the pristine awareness of vipaśyanā appear in the expanse of the pristine space of awareness, like pearls

strung on a string or like floating threads of gold, and they are called the *radiance of wisdom*.

As a sign of liberation due to the vital points of the channels, [428] [the vajra strands] become fine and curly. As a sign of liberation due to the vital points of the vital energies, they appear to be coming and going. As a sign of liberation due to the vital points of the bindus, the bindus are present among the curls. By applying the name of the cause to their effect, they are also called *vajra strands*. In the initial phase and during the interval thereafter they are like pearls strung together, and finally they emerge in the form of latticework and pendants.¹²⁸ They are of the same essential nature but are nominally classified as threefold. As for the etymology, the *Pearl Garland* states:

Consciousness simultaneously realizes phenomena,
the primary among them being the pinnacle of everything.
It is devoid of characteristics that can be viewed as other,
and it arises continuously and appears naturally.
This lamp unimpededly illuminates appearances.¹²⁹

ii' The Lamps of the Yogic Path

The four lamps of the path of appearances are the fluid distant lasso lamp, the lamp of the pristine space of awareness, the lamp of the empty bindus, and the lamp of self-emergent wisdom. These four lamps are united as one during the phase of the yogic path. Know that unifying them and then applying yourself to practice is of the utmost importance.¹³⁰

c' Identifying the Most Important Thing to Know in This Phase

Previously, when determining [429] the nature of the ground during the phase of cutting through, an initial, impure consciousness gives rise to objective appearances, which are taken up by subsequent thoughts, resulting in delusion. Once you have correctly recognized how that occurs, now during the phase of practicing the direct crossing over, your initial consciousness shifts to appearances of clear light, and consciousness actualizes itself. Impure appearances dissolve into the space of awareness, and even though they disappear without a trace, the consciousness of afflictive mentation holds on to

them as being existent. But the impure eon has been destroyed, and the consciousness of their disappearance is an indispensable, sublime aspect of the direct crossing over.

d' The Vital Points of the Body, Speech, and Mind

Unlike nebulous, obscure meditations and constructs of the intellect and mentation, the eye of wisdom enables you to directly see the ultimate reality of the clear light. At the outset you must bind your posture, for if this is not done, the space of awareness, bindus, and vital energies will be dispersed in the channels and elements of the body, and they will not manifest, just as the limbs of a snake will not appear unless he is squeezed.¹³¹ The posture is therefore very important.

First, the dharmakāya posture is like a lion. The physical posture of a lion entails joining the soles of your feet in front of you. [430] Plant your vajra fists on the ground between your legs and look up into the sky. This is the dharmakāya posture and gaze. The soles of your feet are joined in order to keep the afflictive vital energies in their own place. Your vajra fists are placed on the ground to cut off the pathways of the mental afflictions. The purpose of directing your gaze upward is to open the vision of primordial consciousness.

The saṃbhogakāya posture, which is like a reclining elephant, entails planting your knees and elbows on the ground and supporting your cheeks with your palms. Point the soles of your feet outward and gaze directly in front of you. Pointing your soles outward causes the vital energies to flow easily. Pressing your knees against your chest equalizes the heat and cold elements of the body. Pointing your knees and elbows at the ground blocks the impure apertures. Supporting your cheeks with your palms equalizes bliss and emptiness. The purpose of directing your gaze straight in front of you is to realize the self-illumination of primordial consciousness.

The nirmāṇakāya posture, which is like a squatting ṛṣi, entails planting the soles of your feet on the ground, pressing your knees against your chest, and clasping your knees with both hands while interlacing your fingers. Straighten your spine and gaze downward. [431] The soles of your feet press on the air maṇḍala in order to suppress the power of the karmic vital energies. By pressing together the fire maṇḍala of the thighs and the fire maṇḍala of the belly, the impure vital energies of saṃsāra are extinguished in their own place. By pressing together the water maṇḍala of the knees and the fire maṇḍala of the

palms, the heat and cold elements of the body are equalized. By pressing together the fire maṇḍala of the palms and the fire maṇḍala of the armpits, cold disorders are dispelled.¹³² Nothing more is said except that by gazing downward, the eye of omniscience is opened. Nevertheless, if you look straight ahead, the eye of omniscience still opens. Moreover, even if you look upward, the eye of omniscience still opens, so it is said that this makes no difference.¹³³

e' The Three Vital Points for Viewing the Clear Light

The vital point regarding the sense doors is that you look with your eyes partially open, without suddenly opening them wide, for the sharpness of your vision will decline, and the visions of the clear light will not manifest. So do not rigidly fix your gaze. The vital point regarding the vital energies is that you practice breathing gently through your mouth, via a small opening between your lips and teeth, and practice breathing in and out slowly, pausing for a moment once the breath has been exhaled. As for the vital point regarding the object of your gaze, in the beginning, for just a month, during the daytime direct your gaze one cubit [a forearm's length] away from the sun. [432] Then practice during the night to clear away any problems of heat increasing in the eyes from the sun.¹³⁴ In order to achieve stability in the clear light, gaze at the moon in the same way. At night if you gaze at a flame, by looking above it with your eyes half open, at first you will see only something like an orange haystack. After a while, visions will appear in the space of awareness and bindus will arise in the form of quivering lines. Finally beautiful, limpid, clear, vast visions will appear in the space of awareness.

f' Establishing the Basis with the Three Kinds of Stillness

When you practice like this, rest with your body unmoving, like a corpse in a charnel ground; let your voice be still, avoiding all speech and recitation; and do not exhale through your nose but slowly breathe through your mouth, without impeding or forcing the respiration. This is the reliance upon the vital point of freeing the channels and vital energies from control and effort. Abide motionlessly in a state in which consciousness experientially emerges as the clear light, without the mind being modified in any way. In general, wherever you are, by keeping the body straight, all the channels and vital energies will be straight, and once the mind has dissolved into empty pristine awareness, you will

be stabilized in that state.¹³⁵

g' How to Practice

In general, in some other tantric commentaries [433] there are references to various other postures in addition to these three. In particular, until the five lights appear in the space of awareness it is said that you should meditate with various gazes and you should contain the vajra strands within the enclosure of the space of awareness and the bindus. But in [other] meditation manuals on this phase, no such specific points are mentioned. In general, you should remain in whatever way best facilitates the luminosity and appearance of the clear light. Similarly, regarding your posture, practice whichever posture is most comfortable, beneficial, and suitable, for there is no need to practice all three. Statements that various pleasant and rough experiences occur in the phase of progress in meditative experience should be understood as merely referring to these differences. Moreover, if you are drawn to more elaborate practices, you may alternate among the postures and intermittently apply yourself to other practices. If you practice without elaboration, dispense with the nine kinds of activity and apply yourself to meditation continuously, day and night. Those who can meditate only during the daytime should do so continuously throughout the day. There are three special sessions during the early and later periods of the night. Sometimes, as the five vital energies are purified in their own places, [434] visualize a stack of five-colored A syllables to bring about a state of nonconceptuality. You should also know the methods for purifying death and apply yourself to them.

B' The Meaning of the Text

This section has five parts: (1') how direct crossing over is superior even to cutting through, (2') how the four visions gradually arise, (3') how those of superior faculties achieve liberation in this lifetime, (4') the specifics of progress in meditative experience, and (5') how those of middling and inferior faculties are liberated in the transitional phases of ultimate reality and of becoming.

1' How Direct Crossing Over Is Superior Even to Cutting Through

These are practical instructions on forcefully transferring the residual appearances of the emergence of objects to the initial consciousness to the space of awareness of the quintessences.

As explained previously, in general all the various modes of appearances to sentient beings during the daytime, nighttime, and intermediate period arise as **objects to the initial consciousness** of the mindstream of each sentient being. In this phase, those impure, **residual appearances of the emergence of** the physical world, its sentient inhabitants, and sensory **objects** are **forcefully transferred to the space of awareness of the quintessences** of the clear light, by way of a path of skillful means. **These practical instructions** for doing so are therefore superior. Moreover, all the appearances and mindsets of saṃsāra are transferred to the absolute space of ultimate reality. So this is superior to the ordinary transference involving three attitudes, the visualization of consciousness as having shape and color, and its projection in certain directions. [435] This enables you to achieve stability in the great actualization of the displays of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness, and these are practical instructions on gaining liberation within yourself as the actual three kāyas. So this is superior to meditations such as the stage of generation, in which you strenuously use the intellect to visualize autonomous deities in human-like forms. Since the ultimate reality of the clear light directly appears to your senses, this is superior to obscure meditations, such as cutting through. The seven ways in which this is superior, as taught by the omniscient guru [Longchenpa], should be known from the meditation manual the *Guru of Primordial Consciousness*.¹³⁶

2' How the Four Visions Gradually Arise

This section has four parts: (a') the vision of the direct perception of ultimate reality, (b') the vision of progress in meditative experience, (c') the vision of reaching consummate awareness, and (d') the vision of the extinction into ultimate reality.¹³⁷

a' The Vision of the Direct Perception of Ultimate Reality

The initial consciousness emerges as a vision of the clear light, manifesting as a sight for the eye of wisdom.

The **emergence of the initial consciousness as a vision of the clear light** is not due to an ordinary sensory faculty, but rather **manifests as a sight for the eye of wisdom**. Therefore it is a direct perception of ultimate reality. As an outer sign of this, like opening a curtain, the visions in the space of awareness arise majestically and firmly, and the bindus range in size from fish eyes to thumb rings. As an inner sign, the potency of the vase empowerment enters the material constituents of your body, [436] so that you have no wish to move your body, you remain without any desire to speak, and your attention remains wherever you place it. At this point, even if there are obstacles, you will find the relief [of liberation] as a nature *nirmāṇakāya*.¹³⁸ This is not merely due to your initial perception of the signs of the outer visions in the space of awareness, but is rather due to seeing reality, whereby the dust on your inner eye of wisdom has been removed. The *Clear Expanse* states:

With the direct perception of pristine awareness,
there is no returning to the three realms,
for one has seen reality.

b' The Vision of Progress in Meditative Experience

Visions emerge and progress as the great clear light.

Unlike the conscious experiences of the ten signs of purification generated by the convergence of the energy-mind [in the *avadhūti*], by inwardly perceiving the essential nature of ultimate reality as empty, its radiance, as primordial consciousness of the nature of clear light, does not flow outward. Rather, by the power of familiarization with the **great** appearance of clear light, such **visions emerge and progress**, higher and higher, so this is called *progress in meditative experience*. As outer signs of this, visions of **the clear light** increase in magnitude, and the pristine awareness of the space of awareness separates from the point between the eyes. The five lights indeterminately appear horizontally, vertically, [437] and spherically, like *stūpas*, empty lotuses, castles, and arrows, like spear-tips, latticework, and pendants, in checkered designs, and so forth. The lamps of empty bindus increase from the size of thumb rings up to that of

rhinoceros-hide shields. Pristine awareness moves slowly, like a winged creature gliding aloft, like a deer gamboling across a mountainside, like a creeping serpent,¹³⁹ and like a bee hovering over a flower. These are conventional descriptions for those who are somewhat or moderately familiar with the practice. The measure of perfect familiarization is that wherever you look, the domain of empty space is pervaded by visions of clear light, and they remain without fluctuating.

As for the inner signs of appearances to your body, speech, and mind, as an indication that the potency of the secret empowerment has impacted your channels and vital energies, at first various uncomfortable illnesses, such as those related to the wind and phlegm humors, may arise inwardly, from your heart up to your throat. The occurrence of such meditative experiences is indeterminate. Physically, you may act coquettishly or shamelessly, as if you were intoxicated, and you may behave in various drunken ways, unable to stay put. Verbally, like the babbling of a fool, words may flow forth spontaneously, [438] and you may sing various songs and melodies and so on. Mentally, your attention may wander aimlessly, as if your mind were insanely agitated.¹⁴⁰

In this phase, even if you are interrupted by death, you will achieve liberation in the transitional phase of ultimate reality as a saṃbhogakāya.

c' The Vision of Reaching Consummate Awareness

Take satisfaction in the mudrā of pristine awareness ripening as the vital essence.

To take satisfaction in the ripening of pristine awareness as the vital essence in the **mudrā** of the primordial consciousness deities is called *reaching consummate awareness*. The outer signs of the visions in the space of awareness are spheres, lotuses, wheels, and so forth. In a palace-like expanse, at first the upper portions of the kāyas of the five families of jinas appear in the midst of fivefold aggregates of bindus; later the single kāyas appear completely; and finally the deities and their consorts arise in union, together with their retinues of four male bodhisattvas and four female bodhisattvas.¹⁴¹ By the power of increasing familiarity, in the expanse of the outer palace and the inner blazing volcano palace constructed of three tiers of skulls appear maṇḍalas of wrathful herukas with deities and consorts embracing in union, and single male deities bearing great weapons are dressed in fresh elephant skins tied with belts of

human skin, with lower garments of tiger skins. [439] They indeterminately appear in various sizes, the larger ones as vast as the sky and the smaller ones as tiny as peas. All phenomenal worlds appear to be filled and totally pervaded with rainbow light and blazing fire. Objects as small as the head of a pin are filled and illuminated with kāyas and all their ornaments. This marks the perfection of the potency of reaching consummate awareness.

As for the inner signs of this, due to the potency of the wisdom empowerment coming to your mind and bindus, you gain mastery over your energy-mind, and you acquire the eight siddhis.¹⁴² As your body ripens into the clear light, you can move freely through all solid objects such as mountains and rocks. As your voice ripens and is purified as displays of vajra speech, everything you say sounds pleasant to others' ears and benefits their mindstreams. Without reliance on causes and conditions, all Dharma words of authentic tantras, oral transmissions, and pith instructions flow forth naturally. Your mind is liberated as pristine awareness. Pristine awareness awakens within itself, and due to your eye of primordial consciousness penetrating wisdom, you perceive all the appearing phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa with unobscured extrasensory perception, like bright reflections of planets and stars in the great ocean, [440] free of grasping and reifying them.

At this time you gain mastery over pristine awareness. Therefore, without reliance on objects or contributing conditions, you do not encounter situations that throw you off course, but you avoid them by your own power. Having gained mastery over appearances, you can transform even the phenomenal world into a treasure. Having gained mastery over birth, by focusing your awareness on three thousand sentient beings, three thousand nirmāṇakāyas arise to serve the needs of sentient beings. Having gained mastery over liberation, simply by directing your awareness to the great evils of the five deeds of immediate retribution,¹⁴³ you can be liberated from them. Having gained mastery over the outer elements, you can transform them in any way you desire. Having gained mastery over the inner elements, your body becomes free of wrinkles and clear like a reflection in a mirror. Your white hair becomes dark, and new teeth grow. Mudrās of the five buddha families and radiant syllables appear on your body. Your hair and nails stop growing. As a sign of being free of all outer and inner parasites, lice and nits disappear from your body. Your body becomes light like cotton, and your respiration becomes imperceptible. These are definite signs that you have come to the culmination of the authentic path.¹⁴⁴ In this phase of reaching consummate awareness, [441] you are naturally liberated without

undergoing the intermediate period.

d' The Vision of the Extinction into Ultimate Reality

With the extinction of appearances and the mind, you cross over into the absolute space of ultimate reality, and you awaken as the great transference youthful vase kāya.

With the extinction of the outer delusive **appearances** and all inner delusive habitual propensities of **the** concepts of the **mind** and of the mental factors, and with the extinction of all the secret visions of the clear light, **you cross over into the absolute space of** ineffable **ultimate reality**. So this is called the *extinction into ultimate reality*. There are two ways in which such extinction occurs: extinction occurs gradually for anyone who has come to the culmination of the four visions, and simultaneously for those rare individuals of supreme wisdom who achieve extinction by familiarizing themselves with seeing the visions of the direct perception [of ultimate reality] without reliance on the stages of progressive meditative experience and reaching consummate awareness.

Here are the outer signs that precede the extinction of the bindus in the space of awareness: In the indigo expanse of visions in the space of awareness, inside an indigo bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appears a fivefold assembly of indigo [deities] with Akṣobhya in the center.¹⁴⁵ In the intervals between them appear blue-black vajra strands, like blue beryl¹⁴⁶ garlands. From the hearts of these deities emerge threads of indigo light rays, [442] striking your heart, upon which appear the ornaments of stacked indigo bindus like upside-down lapis lazuli bowls.

When that is complete, in the white, luminous expanse in the space of awareness, inside a white bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appears a fivefold assembly of white [deities] including Vairocana and his retinue. In the intervals between them appear strings of vajra strands like crystal garlands. From the hearts of these deities emerge threads of light, white like the moon, striking your heart, upon which appear the ornaments of stacked bindus like upside-down conch bowls.

After that is complete, in the yellow, luminous expanse of visions in the space of awareness, inside a yellow bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appears a fivefold assembly of yellow [deities] including Ratnaśaṃbhava and

his retinue. In the intervals between them appear strings of vajra strands like golden garlands, large and luminous. From the hearts of these deities emerge threads of yellow light rays, striking your heart, upon which appear the ornaments of stacked bindus like upside-down golden bowls.

After that, in the red expanse in the space of awareness, inside a red bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appears a fivefold assembly of red [deities] including Amitābha with his consort [443] in the midst of his retinue. In the intervals between them appear strings of encircling and intertwining vajra strands like before. From the hearts of these deities emerge threads of red light, striking your heart, upon which appear the ornaments of stacked bindus like upside-down coral bowls.

After that process is complete, in the green expanse of visions in the space of awareness, inside a green bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appear Amoghasiddhi and his consort, together with their retinue of four pairs of male and female bodhisattvas. In the intervals between them appear encircling and intertwining vajra strands like turquoise necklaces. From the hearts of these deities emerge green light rays, striking your heart, upon which appear stacked bindus like upside-down turquoise bowls.

As soon as those lights appear, you receive the empowerment of great light rays, which causes your body to diminish in an expanse of light to the size of a finger and then to vanish into clear light. All appearances of the outer physical world and its inner sentient inhabitants dissolve into clear light, leaving no trace of impure appearances. When all the maṇḍalas of herukas in the bone palace appear to you in the sky above, [444] your own body vanishes into light, like salt dissolving into water. In that instant, your consciousness moves like a shooting star and is just the differentiation of appearances and mindsets.

Then the gradual extinction is like this: All the visions of clear light as kāyas and bindus gradually vanish, like masses of clouds disappearing into the sky, and all pure and impure appearances are extinguished. The inner sign of this is that the obscurations of the substrate dissolve into absolute space, and ignorance is dispelled in the ground of being. The self-grasping of afflictive mentation is calmed right where it is, and you are liberated from the bonds of dualistic grasping. Consciousness that grasps at objects is released into the essential nature, so the objects grasped by the intellect are extinguished.

The eight groups of conceptualizations¹⁴⁷ are transmuted into primordial consciousness, and the concepts of the mind and of the mental factors are extinguished. With the extinction of the mind and thoughts that are the basis of

emergences, those emergences disappear right where they are. With the extinction of the consciousness that apprehends objects, apprehended objects are extinguished. The net of self-grasping is released, so the defiled aggregates are extinguished.

At this point your body becomes like a mindless corpse in a charnel ground, and even if you were surrounded by a thousand assassins, you would not have the slightest bit of fear. Your speech becomes like an echo, reverberating all other sounds. Like mist dissolving into the sky, your mind attains nirvāṇa in the absolute space of the [445] primordial protector, pristine awareness, so it can never be deluded again. At this time your own pristine awareness actualizes the state of the primordial protector. Since this does not depend on objective conditions, even if you were to have visions of three thousand buddhas, you would have such confidence that you would not feel the slightest faith in them. Since your own pristine awareness has evenly expanded into the absolute space of the dharmakāya, devoid of signs, even if you were surrounded by a hundred thousand māras and murderers, you would have such confidence that you wouldn't feel even a trace of fear. By reaching your own inner depths for yourself, you come upon the reality that there is no substantially existent nirvāṇa, so you acquire the confidence of having no hope for the maturation of cause and effect. By being liberated in the reality of never having been deluded with regard to your own essential nature, you acquire the confidence of fearlessness regarding saṃsāra and the miserable states of existence. These are the four kinds of great confidence that are acquired.¹⁴⁸

The subtlest of latent cognitive obscurations still arise, and like a flash of lightning that brightens the sky, occasionally your body dissolves into an expanse of light, such that only a body of light the size of a finger appears. Know that this is the differentiation of appearances and mindsets, and there are occasions when your speech and the utterance of words of Dharma occur like before. In that way, after ten days, or five or ten months, the subtle cognitive obscurations vanish into absolute space, [446] and the power of primordial consciousness that knows reality as it is and perceives the full range of phenomena is perfected. Having gained mastery over the originally pure ground dharmakāya, the spontaneously actualized kāyas, and the displays of primordial consciousness, **you awaken as the great transference youthful vase kāya**, with nine characteristics. The *Treatise on Practical Guidance* explains:

O assembled disciples, including Vajra of Pristine Awareness,
listen and pay attention!

listen and pay attention!

These are the extraordinary characteristics
of the spontaneously actualized youthful vase kāya:
The obscurations of ignorance are dispelled in absolute space,
so the dharmakāya surpasses the substrate.
The primordial consciousness of the inner glow manifests,
and it surpasses the brilliance of the outer radiance.
Great identitylessness manifests,
and it surpasses the appearances of the self.
The kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness manifest,
and they surpass appearances.
The perceptions of the full range of phenomena manifest,
and this primordial consciousness surpasses the mind.
You are awakened within yourself,
and this surpasses going to buddhafi elds.
You are freed from all extremes of conceptual elaboration,
and this surpasses the causation of dependent origination.
You are endowed with the eight freedoms,¹⁴⁹
and this surpasses all the paths and fruitions.
You uniformly pervade absolute space and primordial consciousness,
and this surpasses mundane existence. [447]
These nine great, exceptional characteristics
are highly praised by all the jinas
in truly perfected buddhas.¹⁵⁰

3' How Those of Superior Faculties Achieve Liberation in This Lifetime

**The signs of this, like space dissolving into space,
are that there are no limits to your lifespan, duration, and dimensions,
and three kinds of liberation occur as the quintessence of the rainbow body.**

By actualizing the original, pure dharmakāya in this way, **the signs of** truly perfect buddhahood are that, like water dissolving into water or **like space dissolving into space**, your quintessential body has **no limits** with regard to its

lifespan, duration, and dimensions. Without such limitations, you awaken as the great transference youthful vase kāya in the absolute space of phenomena, free of conceptual elaboration.

The bodies of some people become enveloped in light and disappear into the nature of light. This is called the *mass of light*. The bodies of others are encompassed by a shroud of light that covers the sky with rainbows and clouds, and they disappear into rainbow colors. This is called the *great rainbow body*. In these two cases, when you come to the end of your life, you awaken without any separation of your body and mind. Other people, after their bodies and minds have separated, dissolve into the nature of rainbows and light without leaving behind any trace of their aggregates. This is called the *small rainbow body*. For some people, when the ground clear light arises, [448] within seven days the material elements of the body become smaller and smaller, until finally only the residues of their hair and nails remain. This dissolution of the body into elementary particles is called the *small transference*. It also occurs in cutting through, for those of exceptionally superior faculties.

Thus, there is first the mass of light, second the great rainbow body, and [third] the small rainbow body and small transference, or the dissolution into elementary particles, which are counted as one, making three. So **three kinds of liberation occur as the quintessence of the rainbow body**. The former two are the ways those of middling faculties are liberated, and the latter two are the ways those of inferior faculties are liberated. The first great transference is the way those of superior faculties are liberated.

Although some people wish for the rainbow body with no final testament, they are liberated in the great transference as described previously. Others who aspire for the rainbow body with no physical pain achieve it as a mass of light and a great rainbow body. Yet others who wish to transfer to the rainbow body achieve the small rainbow body and disappear into minute particles. So the first is the dharmakāya of entering the womb of natural liberation, the second two are the dharmakāya of nondual union, and the final two are the dharmakāya of transference to primordial consciousness. [449] However you are liberated among these three ways, the unwavering dharmakāya manifests limitlessly as displays of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness.¹⁵¹

In this phase, here is the meaning of the fluctuations of the four visions: As an analogy, although there are no fluctuations from the perspective of the moon, there are appearances of increases and decreases in terms of the lunar cycles. Likewise, while there are no fluctuations from the perspective of the visions of

the clear light, all the sublime qualities of the saṃbhogakāya without exception are complete in the nature of pristine awareness. By the power of familiarization, they are seen as visions of the path, and their creative power is perfected. Even though they appear like this, they are merely reflections of the outer radiance of pristine awareness, but not its essential nature. Therefore, the outer appearances of the natural radiance of the sugatagarbha must be extinguished. For this reason, the pinnacle of ultimate truth is said to be utterly pure pristine awareness, together with its subtle, vacillating energies, abiding in its place of power in primordial absolute space in which there is the vision of the extinction of the intellect and of phenomena.

4' The Specifics of Progress in Meditative Experience

**Due to various, indeterminate good and bad visionary experiences,
joys and sorrows arise over the course of time.
Without hope or fear, transfer them all into absolute space.**

Regarding the phase of progress in meditative experience explained earlier, this is the point at which all the coarse visions, channels, and energies merge into [450] the absolute space of the subtle, great clear light of ultimate reality. Therefore, **due to the various, indeterminate** ways in which both **good and bad visionary experiences** occur, sometimes the body feels good and the mind feels **joy**, and at other times illnesses arise in the body, and **sorrow** and so on **arise** in the mind, **over the course of time**. Visions of gods and demons and various kinds of extrasensory perception may arise, and on occasion you may experience an unbearably strong sense of faith, devotion, and renunciation. Sometimes strong arrogance may fill your mind such that you exalt your own view.

Moreover, you may be led astray by false appearances of regional ḍākinīs and local ḍākinīs.¹⁵² Regional ḍākinīs are ḍākinīs of areas who deceptively call themselves ḍākinīs of the absolute space of primordial consciousness, masquerading as such and making prophecies. By taking them to be true and practicing in accordance with what they say, you come under the domination of such ḍākinīs, resulting in endless delusion in the realms of saṃsāra. Local ḍākinīs are mundane ḍākinīs who enter the hearts of women of an area and by various means deceive others. If you fall under their influence, you will be thrown back into endless saṃsāra. [451]

At such times, by truly recognizing saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as being nothing other than your own appearances, unreal like illusions and dreams, you come to rest in a state free of reification and clinging. As a result, the ḍākinīs come under your power, and you spontaneously achieve the secret supreme siddhi without seeking it.

At such times, you may also be deceived by obstructing māras. Unstable meditative experiences and realizations may suddenly arise, you may think you know the minds of others, you may have the sense that you can emanate various bodies and colors, and you may cast two shadows and reflect two images in a mirror. These are sure signs that you are in danger of falling under the domination of māras. When this happens, offer the smoke of frankincense, bathe yourself with the water of large and small ambrosia pills, rub the clay of an old statue onto your limbs, and recite mantras for dispelling obstacles. In so doing, they will be dispelled.

You may be deceived and led astray by beings appearing as gods, when obstructive beings deceptively take on the form of your personal deity, proudly showing their faces and granting prophecies. These are definitely the deceptions of māras. So if this happens, know that everything in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is nothing but your own appearances, and all forms, gods, and buddhas that are held to be substantially existent [452] are simply delusive. In this way, **without** indulging in clinging or **hope**, recognize that all harms by demons, malevolent spirits, and obstructive beings, as well as ominous portents and bad omens and so on that seem to be harmful, are all utterly deceptive meditative appearances. In that way rest **in the absolute space** of equality of ultimate reality, free of **fear** and aversion. In so doing, adversities will arise as the path and misfortunes will arise as aids, so that they become meditative experiences and realizations that enhance your practice. Thus they **transfer**, or propel, you to the culmination of the path.¹⁵³

5' How People of Middling and Inferior Faculties Who Do Not Reach the Culmination of the Path in This Lifetime Are Liberated in the Transitional Phases of Ultimate Reality and of Becoming

Individuals who do not reach the culmination of the path like that

realize the vital points of the view and meditation, like a swallow entering its nest;
identify the transitional phase of dying, like a lovely young woman gazing at her reflection;
recognize the nature of existence, like meeting someone you have known before;
merge the clear light into absolute space, like a child crawling onto its mother's lap;
practice continuously, like repairing a broken irrigation canal;
block the entrance to the womb, like being released from a foul prison; and so on.

Recognize the supreme importance of these six analogies and their vital points.

By this it is possible that you will be liberated or find relief.

The presentation of the ways in which **individuals** of middling and inferior faculties **who do not reach the culmination of the path like that** in this lifetime are liberated in the intermediate period has three parts: (a') the essential nature, (b') divisions, and (c') individual ways of transforming the transitional phases into the path.

a' The Essential Nature

Everything that appears to be other than the originally pure ground constitutes processes of the transitional phases. The phenomena that arise as appearances to the ground primordial consciousness constitute the transitional phase of ultimate reality. All phenomena included among the delusive appearances of the six realms of existence constitute impure, delusive transitional phases. Volitions together with their seeds constitute the transitional phases from the time they arise from the space of awareness until they are extinguished in absolute space.
[453]

b' Divisions

This section has four parts: the transitional phase of living, or of nature; the transitional phase of dying; the transitional phase of ultimate reality; and the transitional phase of becoming. The first occurs from the time you are conceived

in your mother's womb until you are struck by a mortal disease. The second takes place from the time you approach death until your breath ceases. The third lasts from the moment your breath stops until the visions of the clear light arise and the spontaneously actualized visions dissolve. The fourth occurs from the moment the spontaneously actualized visions dissolve until your next birth takes place.

c' Individual Ways of Transforming the Transitional Phases into the Path

The four kinds of transitional phases are taught in six ways in terms of pairs of analogies and their referents. First, during the transitional phase of living you cut through misconceptions by hearing, thinking, and **realizing the vital points of the view and meditation, like a swallow entering its nest**. Second, in the transitional phase on the verge of death you **identify the transitional phase of dying** and vividly bring to mind the teachings on which you have meditated previously, **like a lovely young woman gazing at her reflection** in a mirror. Third, you gain conviction by **recognizing the** originally pure **nature of existence** in the transitional phase of ultimate reality, **like meeting someone you have known before**. Recognizing the spontaneously actualized visions of **the clear light** as your own appearances [454] and then **merging**, or releasing, them **into absolute space is like a child crawling onto its mother's lap**. Fourth, in the transitional phase of becoming, recognizing the signs of taking birth in any of the six realms and maintaining **the continuity of the practice** you have learned previously gives rise again to the ground clear light, the originally pure dharmakāya. Achieving liberation in this way **is like repairing a broken irrigation canal**. Alternatively, to **block the** dreadful **entrance to birth** from an impure **womb**, bring to mind any pristine buddhafiield that provides great relief. By doing so, you will proceed there, which will be **like being released from a foul prison**.

The other kinds of transitional phases taught in authoritative sources include the transitional phase of the cultivation of meditation and the delusive transitional phase of dreaming. It is crucial that you **recognize the supreme importance of these vital points of practice**, illustrated by **the six analogies**,¹⁵⁴

and diligently apply yourself to them. **By the power of practicing like this, it is possible that you will be liberated** in the transitional phase of ultimate reality **or else find relief** in a pure buddhafiield in the transitional phase of becoming.

These points should be fathomed in greater detail on the basis of commentarial treatises.

This concludes the seventh phase revealed in the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*.

117. Tib. 'khor 'das ru shan.

118. See VE 395–418.

119. This outline differs from the actual structure of the text that follows, which gives these headings: (a') a general synthesis of direct crossing over and so forth, (b') recognizing the principal points of this specific phase, (c') identifying the most important thing to know in this phase, (d') the vital points of the body, speech, and mind, (e') the three vital points for viewing the clear light, (f') establishing the basis with the three kinds of stillness, and (g') how to put the stages into practice. The presentation of the lamps occurs within section (b').

120. This section compares with VE 423–24.

121. This paragraph compares with VE 424–25.

122. This etymologizes “fluid distant lasso lamp” (Tib. *rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*): distant (*rgyang*) lasso (*zhags*) fluid (*chu*) lamp (*sgron ma*).

123. Tib. *rdo rje lu gu rgyud*. Lit. “vajra lamb-strings,” alluding to the appearances of grazing sheep.

124. This etymologizes “lamp of the pristine space of awareness” (Tib. *dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*): space of awareness (*dbyings*) pristine (*rnam par dag pa*) lamp (*sgron ma*).

125. The *Vajra Essence* states instead that the quintessence of blood is white and that the quintessence of warmth is red (VE 426–27).

126. These four paragraphs compare with VE 425–27.

127. This etymologizes “lamp of the empty bindus” (Tib. *thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*): bindus (*thig le*), empty (*stong pa*), lamp (*sgron ma*).

128. These three paragraphs compare with VE 427–28.

129. This etymologizes “lamp of self-emergent wisdom” (Tib. *shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*). The component terms in Tibetan do not correspond directly to the English terms here.

130. This paragraph compares with VE 428.

131. Tibetan lore considered a male snake’s hemipenes, which can be everted by applying pressure, to be his “limbs.”

132. This line refers to an alternate form of the *nirmāṇakāya* posture in which the arms are crossed over the knees with the palms at the armpits. The *Vajra Essence* adds this point: “By pressing together the water maṇḍala of the backs of the hands and the water maṇḍala of the throat, heat disorders are dispelled.”

133. This section compares with VE 419–21.

134. Although the improper daytime practice of gazing near the sun may impair your vision, it is said that the nighttime practice of gazing at the moon may actually enhance your vision. Most important is to carefully monitor and adjust your practice to avoid damaging your eyesight.

135. These two sections compare with VE 422–23.

136. Tib. *Khrid yig ye shes bla ma*. Vidyādhara Jigmed Lingpa, *Yeshe Lama*, trans. Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2008), 65.

137. This introduction was missing and has been added here for clarity.

138. Tib. *rang bzhin sprul pa*. The term “nature” refers to the manifest nature, which is the second quality of pristine awareness, and this is the path form of the saṃbhogakāya, so this kind of nirmāṇakāya is a reflection of the saṃbhogakāya.

139. Skt. *śara*.

140. This paragraph compares with VS 593–94.

141. These two sentences compare with VS 598–99.

142. See *siddhis*, *eight* in glossary.

143. See *deeds of immediate retribution*, *five* in glossary.

144. These two paragraphs compare with VS 597–98.

145. In each of the five visions described here, beginning with this one, with Akṣobhya in the center, the principal deity is in union with his consort, and they are surrounded by four male and four female bodhisattvas in union. They constitute a “fivefold assembly.”

146. Tib. *mu men*; Skt. *vairāṭa*. This is a dark-blue gemstone that is astringent in taste. Its post-digestive effects are cooling, and in terms of its healing effects, it benefits illnesses from poisoning, leprosy, lymph disorders, and skin disorders. Blue beryl may match this description, but this requires further research.

147. The eight groups of conceptualizations (Tib. *tshogs brgyad kyi rtog pa*) are (1) conceptualizations of signs, involving grasping at objects, (2) conceptualizations to which the signs of the six kinds of consciousness appear, (3) conceptualizations that change in accordance with the signs of pleasure, pain, and so on, (4) conceptualizations to which appear signs emerging from changes among the six kinds of consciousness, (5) conceptualizations that are revealed by others involving the evaluation of what one has heard regarding virtue and nonvirtue, (6) authentic conceptualizations concerning impermanence and so on, (7) conceptualizations involving fixation on false views, and (8) inauthentic conceptualizations concerning the view of the self and so on.

148. These nine paragraphs compare with VS 600–604.

149. See *freedoms*, *eight* in glossary.

150. Tib. *khrid gzhung*. This refers to the *Vajra Essence* (VE 465–66).

151. These three paragraphs compare with VS 604–5.

152. Tib. *zhing gi mkha' 'gro*; *gnas kyi mkha' 'gro*.

153. These five paragraphs compare with VS 594–96.

154. Regarding the other analogies not explicitly mentioned here, the transitional phase of living is likened to a little bird on a treetop; the transitional phase of dreaming is likened to a lamp held aloft in a dark room; the transitional phase of meditation is likened to an exhausted person taking a rest or to an orphan encountering its mother; the transitional phase of dying is likened to falling into the hands of an evil assassin or to dispatching the sealed commands of the king.

Phase 8: How to Dwell in the Ground of Being¹⁵⁵

c. The Manner in Which the Indivisible Nature of the Ground and the Fruition Is Actualized [455]

This section has three parts: (i) identifying the essential nature of the fruition that is to be achieved, (ii) the explanation of how to achieve it, and (iii) how to serve the needs of others after achieving this.

i. Identifying the Essential Nature of the Fruition That Is to Be Achieved

**Ultimately, in the fruition of liberation,
the ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha,
is spontaneously actualized as the dharmakāya, the primordial protector.
That which is to be achieved is the youthful vase kāya.**

Due to **ultimate** familiarization with the path, you are finally **liberated** from obscurations that are to be abandoned, and you actualize the primordial consciousness that is to be realized. The essential nature of this is called the **fruition**. In accordance with the individual yānas corresponding to people's dispositions and faculties, there are different ways of achieving fruition and of purifying defilements. Among them, the fruition of this phase is the **ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha**. Since the nature of the vast, sublime qualities of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness is **spontaneously actualized as the dharmakāya, the primordial protector**, without reliance on causes or contributing conditions, this is the nature of primordial awakening. As for the way to purify defilements, by perfecting your familiarity with the effortless, naturally settled path of the Great Perfection, the obscurations and habitual propensities of appearances and mindsets that arise from the root of self-concepts are dispelled without a trace, and you actualize the ultimate **achievement of the youthful vase kāya**, which is enlightenment.

The essential nature of this twofold purity [456] is empty primordial consciousness, the dharmakāya. Its manifest nature is the clear-light primordial consciousness, the saṃbhogakāya. The primordial consciousness of unimpeded compassion is the nirmāṇakāya. These are the three inwardly luminous kāyas of absolute space. The saṃbhogakāyas adorned with the signs and symbols of enlightenment manifest to pure disciples, and the supreme nirmāṇakāyas, who show the twelve deeds of a buddha and so on, manifest to impure disciples. These are the two outwardly luminous kāyas of primordial consciousness.

ii. The Explanation of How to Achieve It

Those of superior faculties actualize this in one lifetime; those of middling and inferior faculties find pristine relief in the splendor of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness and dwell in the grounds of the five buddhafiels.

Those of superior faculties with wisdom and perseverance perfect the view of cutting through to original purity and the meditation of direct crossing over to spontaneous actualization. In so doing, they achieve enlightenment as the dharmakāya by truly **actualizing** the primordial nature of existence of their own ground, **in this one lifetime** and with this one body. **Those of middling faculties** who do not have the good fortune to be liberated as the dharmakāya identify as their own appearances the peaceful and wrathful visions of the radiance of pristine awareness in the transitional phase of ultimate reality. They achieve enlightenment as saṃbhogakāyas, with their universal **splendor** of the ocean of **the kāyas, facets of primordial consciousness**, and sublime qualities. Due to the truth of ultimate reality and the blessings of vidyādhara gurus, those of **inferior** faculties **dwell** for 550 years **in the grounds of the five pristine buddhafiels that provide** pure **relief**, including the four — Abhirati, Śrīmat, Padmakūṭa,¹⁵⁶ [457] and Karmaprasiddhi — and the wrathful buddhafiels known as the Blazing Volcano Charnel Ground, emanated in the space before them. Then they perfect the practices on the authentic path and achieve enlightenment.

The omniscient Abhyadvīpa states:

The five pristine buddhafiels that provide pure relief are called *naturally emanated buddhafiels*, for they are naturally displayed by the blessings of the

teacher Vajradhara. As for the cause for them to directly appear to those with karmic momentum, due to the self-illumination of the four facets of primordial consciousness, including mirror-like primordial consciousness, in the all-pervasive heart of the realm of the sugatagarbha, the precious portals to the spontaneously actualized appearances of the ground primordially and naturally manifest as appearances of the path, in accordance with the directions of the saṃbhogakāyas. Do not regard them as existing in specific directions such as the east, as is commonly stated, for that is only symbolic.

If you think this contradicts statements about the number of yojanas of their spatial dimensions, those buddhafi elds are vaster than the nature of the three realms, so such explanations are not to be taken literally. [458] Likewise, those beings who dwell in wrathful maṇḍalas arise from the primordial aspects of the wrathful deities in the bone palace.

Know this to be so, in accordance with his explanation.

iii. How to Serve the Needs of Others after Achieving This

**You appear in all ways as the glory and protector of disciples,
like the moon and its various reflections in water.
Until the radiant circle of disciples dissolves into absolute space,
the primordial consciousness of absolute space is continuously displayed.**

Thus, when **you** serenely abide as the one dharmakāya, the two rūpakāyas **appear** from the aspects of spontaneously actualized primordial consciousness and compassion, **in all ways** serving the temporal and ultimate needs **of disciples as the glory and protector** of living beings. From your own side, you have abandoned delusive appearances and their attributes, so while free of delusive appearances, you perceive the mere arising of nonexistent, clear appearances to others and reveal the Dharma.

Due to the buddhas' power of natural compassion, the saṃbhogakāya appears to disciples with pure karma **like the moon** in the sky, **and** nirmāṇakāyas **variously** appear to disciples with impure karma like the moon's **reflections in water**. Limitless beings fail to see their own ground of being, the nature of existence of the sugatagarbha, and due to their tenacious habitual

propensities of dualistic grasping, their own appearances [459] arise like delusive dreams. They are **the radiant circle of disciples**. Until they **dissolve into absolute space** due to realizing and familiarizing themselves with the path, the inner luminosity **of absolute space** arises as the outer luminosity of **the primordial consciousness** of the three kāyas, and the **displays** of the two rūpakāyas **continuously** arise and serve the needs of living beings. When the pools of water of disciples dry up, the nirmāṇakāya reflections of the moon, which are created by the perceptions of disciples, dissolve into the saṃbhogakāya moon in the sky. This is not really like one dissolving into the other. Rather, the radiance of the outer luminosity dissolves inwardly into the self-manifestation of the saṃbhogakāya in absolute space, free of conceptual elaboration, and this converges back into the dharmakāya, great primordial consciousness. Advocates of the Madhyamaka say that this union is sublime, serene cessation in the absolute space of phenomena, while advocates of the Great Perfection say this dissolution into inner luminosity is the youthful vase kāya of unveiled primordial consciousness.

This concludes the synthesis of this phase, revealed in the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*.

III. The Colophon

This visionary experience arose as an illusory display of the primordial consciousness of Traktung Dūdjom Pawo. After some time it was earnestly requested by the hermetic disciples Pema Tashi, Orgyen Dorjé, Rikpé Nyugu, and Lodrö Wangpo. Since this was meaningful, may the virtue that results from it dredge the three realms of saṃsāra from their depths.

Virtue, virtue, virtue — sarva maṅgalam!

Dedication Prayer by Pema Tashi

For as long as this deluded mind identifies [460] with this impure, illusory body,
everything you do is a cause of saṃsāra, and the results never transcend
suffering.

Even though occasions of prosperity in mundane existence do occur, it is
obvious that these unreal, illusory deceptions lead you astray.

So here is advice on the meaning of identitylessness to be followed by those who recognize this and seek liberation.

If you do not realize that all phenomena in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are simply your own appearances, with no basis or root, by merely knowing a superficial emptiness, you will not achieve the Mahāyāna ārya grounds.

If you do not realize how to transform into the path the spontaneously actualized appearances of the radiance of pristine awareness of the essential nature of original purity, you will be overcome by the dust of transmigration among the three appearances, failing to see the original nature of existence.

Therefore, the sole protector of all beings, which is unrivaled in the realms of mundane existence and ultimate peace, is this one supreme path that has been and will be followed by all jinas.

By the power of the blessings of great compassion and the great fortune and good deeds of disciples, this appears only this one time, so it is difficult to find and is even more rare than the *udumbara* flower.¹⁵⁷

If it is said that by merely hearing its name, even great sinners are freed from the miserable realms of existence, it is certain that those who practice by hearing, thinking, and meditating will become bodhisattvas who reach the end of mundane existence.

Careful examination of this reveals the great significance of finding it, [461] which surpasses [finding] a wish-fulfilling jewel.

Those who unwaveringly devote themselves to this day and night are exalted as the foremost of all Dharma practitioners.

Although there is nothing more profound than the Dharma of the Great Perfection, for those who fail to connect with it and who arrogantly denounce cause and effect, it is a cause for miserable rebirths.

Until you have reached a high level of realization, such that you experience no pain even if you are cut with a weapon, with great devotion apply yourself to the profound practical instructions on what to abandon and what to follow in terms of cause and effect.

Although the meditative equipoise of the Great Perfection is ineffable, when first entering the practice as a novice, even if you express your opinions to others as if you were accompanied by visions of texts and reasoning, it is important to gain certainty regarding explanations that do not contradict the profound nature of existence and the vast nature of appearances, so that you know how to properly teach what does and does not exist, what is and is not, and what is to be avoided and what is to be practiced.

...to be avoided and what is to be practiced.

If you are a courageous practitioner of this discipline, you will not be overcome by adversity, but immature people discriminate against others in terms of comparing their class to others’.

In a pleasant, wonderful place of solitude, which pacifies outer and inner distractions,

abandon pointless and trivial concerns and activities and apply yourself to practicing the essence of that which is greatly meaningful.

Come to know [462] the ultimate nature of existence, like the space of the sky, and abide in displays of practice.

The wisdom of an ordinary person lacking inborn and cultivated virtues does not go far, like the flight of a honeybee, but once you have found delight in the garden of excellent meaning, the melodious explanation of whatever you have understood will hum forth.

Those who taste this sweet essence again and again perfect the power of blessed confidence.

Those who divulge secrets incur problems, and those who despise or disparage this path

will be tormented by *duḥkha*; it is inadvisable to divulge anything even upwind of such people.

When perceiving this path, suitable vessels feel great devotion and confidence in its explanation; even if they are from a low class and poor, it is said that they should be taught without reservation.

Guardians and protective demons¹⁵⁸ of the teachings of secret mantra punish those who violate their samayas, and they support and befriend those who keep them; understand how they do so in accordance with traditional accounts.

May the immaculate collections of virtue, dedicated following the wisdom of Mañjuḥṣa, flow like the current of the Ganges.

May the experience of the nature of existence by way of this effortless path merge with the ocean of omniscience.

In the short term, may unfavorable circumstances throughout the world fully subside,

and may our spiritual and mundane bounties [463] be equal to the fortune of the gods of Tuṣita.

Through thick and thin until enlightenment, may we always be accompanied by the unfailing affection and respect of vajra siblings with common karma and

aspirations, and may we practice the Vajrayāna.

This pure vision of the great treasure revealer Lama Dūdjom Dorjé Trolö Tsal is a set of Dharma teachings that arose from the treasury of space. This commentary to the *Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra* was taught to a few Dharma friends near the hermitage Drak Yangzong¹⁵⁹ of the Second Buddha Orgyen [Padmasambhava]. On that occasion, the memorized oral teachings of the venerable, great treasure revealer Dūdjom Dorjé were held as supreme, and Pema Manga,¹⁶⁰ with devotion for this foremost path, wrote them down so that they would not be forgotten.

Virtue — *sarva maṅgalam!*

May the teachings of this profound treasure, the Great Perfection of the Early Translation school of the tradition of Padmasambhava, the definitive, essential tradition of Dūdjom Lingpa, be preserved through teaching and practice, without declining until the end of mundane existence!

Virtue, virtue, virtue — *sarva maṅgalam!*

¹⁵⁵. This heading is not included in the commentary, but it accords with the root text.

¹⁵⁶. Tib. *pad ma brtsegs pa*. A synonym for the buddhafiield of Sukhāvātī.

¹⁵⁷. This may refer to the flower of the blue lotus (*Nila udumbara*) or of the cluster fig tree (*Ficus racemosa*), whose flowers are hidden within the fig and hence symbolize rarity.

¹⁵⁸. Tib. *gnyan*.

¹⁵⁹. Tib. *sgrags yang rdzong*. Guru Rinpoché's cave in Tibet's Sgrags Valley.

¹⁶⁰. Pema Manga (Tib. *pad ma mang ga*) is a moniker for Dūdjom Lingpa's disciple Pema Tashi, whose surname means "auspicious" (Skt. *manga*).

The Foolish Dharma of an Idiot Clothed in Mud and Feathers

by
Düdjom Lingpa



[460] In that very instant I awoke from the dense slumber of the mind into the buddhafiield of Akaniṣṭha, the absolute space of phenomena, free of extremes.

My own pristine awareness arose as the dharmakāya teacher, the great, immutable, all-pervasive lord;
the creative power of self-emergent primordial consciousness manifested as a display of myriad disciples;
and its own inner glow appeared as the great expanse of the spontaneously actualized Great Perfection. How amazing!

TO THOSE WHOSE minds are utterly dedicated to the one path traveled by all the jinas, who know they have arrived at a crossroads, but due to their blindness to the view, cannot see with certainty where to go, [461] I guess this is a bit of what I, an old man who knows the way, would tell them.

Some brilliant scholars disparage the Dharma and individuals, and with skill in ridicule abandon the Dharma and commit root downfalls. With the full ripening of that karma, they are vaulted into the depths of the ocean of saṃsāra. In the eyes of such experts, if even the teachings of the jinas are not appealing, there's no need to speak of others' teachings. If I err in the eyes of others who are endowed with the eye of wisdom and proper conduct, I confess and disclose all the breaches of conduct, vices, and downfalls committed in all my lifetimes. [462] May they be purified and cleansed, and may I please be granted the supreme siddhi in this very lifetime!

While I have sat at the feet of sublime human teachers and spiritual mentors and drunk the ambrosia of their teachings, I have not become an authority. Nevertheless, on occasion this fool has engaged in stupid meditations that I have fabricated myself. On the basis of illusory visions in dreams, in which others have granted me pointing-out instructions, I have engaged in investigation and analysis and tried very hard to practice. However, since I have not encountered a guru to lead me on the path, I have developed a growing sense of high self-esteem, pride, and arrogance. That is my experience, and I have proudly taken it to be realization and have confidence in it. Since I definitely lack even the slightest excellent qualities of unmistakable primordial consciousness stemming from an authentic view and meditation, I have behaved as in the well-known aphorism, "While the marmot seems to be practicing meditation, it is actually

just hibernating.” I am candidly revealing my own faults, without hiding anything, so please look upon me with compassion! However, if I express the offering of my heart’s blood while at least not violating the teachings of my sublime gurus, then what else is there to do but write?

In my opinion, if you don’t submit your own snout to the hook and rope of self-centeredness, [463] but rather aspire for the hereafter by thinking of definitely reaping a harvest for all future lives, free of deception, then if you don’t do something meaningful in this present, precious human rebirth with its leisure and opportunity, it will be difficult to obtain such an opportunity repeatedly in the future. This occasion — of circumstances aligning and finding freedom — is no more than a dream, so if you pointlessly squander it, when you lose such freedom what will you do? Carefully reflect on this and know your own situation for yourself. This is the first point.

On this occasion when you have such a bounty of opportunities in terms of your body, environment, friends, spiritual mentors, time, and practical instructions, without procrastinating until tomorrow and the next day, arouse a sense of urgency, as if a spark landed on your body or a grain of sand fell in your eye. If you have not swiftly applied yourself to practice, examine the births and deaths of other beings and reflect again and again on the unpredictability of your lifespan and the time of your death, and on the uncertainty of your own situation. Meditate on this until you have definitively integrated it with your mind. This is the second point.

Now on the delusive, vast, illusory plain of emanations and transformations, reckless lunatics ride [464] the blind, wild steed of spiritual sloth, and, lacking the reins to control it, they lash it again and again with the whip of negligence. Thus, although there was a time when they could have sown a perennial harvest for all their lifetimes, from this life onward they are relentlessly impaled on the sharp spokes of the wheel of saṃsāra and the miserable states of existence. Fierce karmic energies bind them, they have nowhere to escape, and they are cast from one life to another. When that time comes [for you], you will have no freedom. Rather than wondering whether there is anyone who can protect you when you arrive in such a great fire pit of suffering, put off human pretense and the pursuit of this life’s affairs. This is the third point.

These [three points] are the field of sublime Dharma, the exhortation to achieve liberation, and the sole guide, guardian, and spiritual mentor to turn you away from the paths that descend into the dungeon of suffering of saṃsāra and the miserable states of existence. The spirit of emergence and spiritual zeal of those

who lack these three points are like dew in the summertime.

Hey!

Individuals endowed with karma and good fortune have obtained a life of leisure and opportunity due to the assembly and timely ripening of a causal nexus of fortuitous connections of karma and prayers.

The fruits of that which was sown previously are being used up right now, but whatever joys and sorrows the future holds depend on [465] you.

The appearances of this life, including your surroundings and friends, are like last night's dream, and this life passes more swiftly than a flash of lightning in the sky.

There is no end to this meaningless work. What a joke to prepare to live forever! Wherever you are born in the heights or depths of saṃsāra, the great noose of suffering will hold you tight.

Acquiring freedom for yourself is as rare as a star in the daytime, so how is it possible to practice and achieve liberation?

The root of all mind training and practical instructions is planted by knowing the nature of existence. There is no other way.

I, an old vagabond, have shaken my beggar's satchel, and this is what came out.

Having established those teachings as your foundation, with constant devotion offer prayers of supplication to your guru. Outwardly, imagine your guru on the crown of your head. Inwardly, visualize your own body as the guru. Secretly, again and again transfer your own vital energies, mind, and consciousness, and nondually merge them with the nonconceptual primordial consciousness of your guru's mind. This is the first point.

With devotion and affection, visualize your companions as being of the nature of vīras and ḍākinīs, and see the fine qualities of your guru and Dharma siblings rather than looking at their faults. This is the second point.

In this limitless realm of saṃsāra, [466] among all sentient beings, who are tormented and bound by unbearable suffering, there is not even one who has not been your father or mother. In other times, like your present father and mother, they cared for you with food and comfortable clothing and benefited you in countless ways. Having protected you from immeasurable fears and miseries, they have all been enormously kind. What they all desire is happiness, but in terms of their behavior, these poor fools engage in the causes and sow the seeds of suffering. Feeling compassion for each one, constantly reflect on this until

heartfelt compassion causes tears to flow from your eyes and your mindstream is subdued. Beyond that, make the resolution, “I shall bring them to the state of omniscient, unsurpassed, authentic, perfect buddhahood,” and apply yourself to the practice of the sublime, profound Dharma. Whatever Dharma you perform, dedicate it to all sentient beings, with no partiality toward those near or far. This is the third point.

These three are the essential nature of all Dharmas, the root of all Dharmas, the source of all Dharmas, and the eyes and limbs of all Dharmas. Without them, whatever Dharma you perform will be like a corpse with no head or limbs. [467]

Hurrah!

If excellent people who wish to enter the authentic path really want to practice the sublime Dharma, they should make offerings for the sake of their practice; they should make prayers of supplication to their guru, who is the essential nature of all the buddhas combined; and they should receive empowerment and siddhis.

All food, drink, clothing, ornaments, enjoyments, movement, and rest are to be brought onto the path as *gaṇacakra* offerings, prostrations, and circumambulations.

Always regard your Dharma friends and siblings on the path who have the same samayas as you as manifestations of *vīras* and *ḍākinīs*. It is important that you honor them with heartfelt affection and with equanimity, without feeling close to those who are good or distant from those who are bad.

All beings without exception have been your kind parents, and they are objects of compassion, floundering in the swamp of suffering. Without ever mentally abandoning them, generate a heroic attitude of great courage in your solemn pledge to bring them to a state of bliss.

This is my innermost aspiration, but although I would like to be of benefit to fools like myself, I have no special erudition, writing skills, or attractive qualities.

Know that never being separated from these three points is like fertile ground for practice and like the foundation stones of a fortress.

When I thought of going to a big marketplace dressed up in impressive, striking clothes, but found no such attire, [468] in the end I smeared my body with mud and stuck various twigs, grass, flowers, and feathers on it. Now I will explain the

foolish meditations of one who wears mud and feathers for clothing, regarding them as if they were the finest garments and ornaments. So listen! Observe! And laugh at this!

Now some contemplatives these days say you should cherish good thoughts and stop bad ones, but I think this is like closing the doors and windows after a thieving dog has escaped outside and then groping about inside the dark house. Some say that you should follow after previous thoughts as if you were sending a hunting dog after a fox, and then apply antidotes. That is a good practice for novices, but I think people who spend their whole lives at this and regard it as the best of practices may be fooling themselves by compounding one delusion with another. Some observe their thoughts “over there” like an old herdsman on a wide-open plain watching his calves and sheep from afar. I say that, too, is a practice for novices, but if you take it alone as the path, you will build confidence in the mere meditative experiences of bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality. [469] Having climbed to the top of the towering, mighty fortress of self-importance, such people look down upon others with a haughty gaze while posing majestically in the saddle of their fine steed. If I examine those whose lives pass in this way, I see that in the past they have created the causes for spinning around and around in saṃsāra under the influence of dualistic grasping. It seems to me that if they persist in overdoing such meditation, what need is there to say that this will act as a great anchor, further grounding them in saṃsāra?

Some people say that thoughts are like bolts of lightning, that primordial consciousness, pristine awareness, is like clear light, and that the nonduality of appearances and pristine awareness is the authentic path. Others say that as soon as thoughts arise, the authentic path is to recognize for yourself the nonduality of that which appears and that which cognizes. This has the same meaning as the preceding [position]. It seems to me that if you are like a garuḍa that can fly from its nest, it is absurd for you to expel 21,000 dead mice from your nest in a single day!¹⁶¹ If you take these [practices] as the path and get stuck there, you will be like a blind, dazed person wandering about on a plain with no companions. Know that they are indeed indispensable, specific phases of familiarization on the path, like the three specific phases of childhood, youth, and adulthood [470] in the course of a person’s life.

In meditative visions and dreams, I was granted pointing-out instructions by way of symbols and words expressed by the glorious Lake-Born Vajra of Orgyen, and I possess a path of my own, of stable illusory visions of my body,

speech, and mind being blessed by his three vajras.

To summarize, novices enter the authentic path by means of investigation and familiarization, so first go to a place of solitude, sit on a comfortable cushion, and generate bodhicitta, the aspiration to achieve perfect enlightenment. With sincere devotion, offer prayers of supplication to your guru and take the four empowerments.¹⁶² Then identify the primacy of the mind among the body, speech, and mind, dispelling any uncertainty about this point. Then carefully investigate this so-called mind in terms of its initial place of origin, its location in the interim, and its final destination. Analysis of these points reveals the emptiness of its origin, location, and destination.

Then investigate the mind as the agent that conjures up all kinds of thoughts, seeking out its shape, color, and form, as well as its source, beginning, and end, and whether it really exists or is totally nonexistent. By doing so, once you have determined with confidence that it cannot be established in any way at all, you have entered the path. [471]

If you forcefully suppress the thought process while focusing your mind single-pointedly on such things as a stick or pebble, then many obsessive thoughts will arise, as if you had blocked an irrigation canal, and your body, speech, and mind may become sharply uncomfortable. In that case, loosely relax and watch your thoughts from afar, clearly observing whatever arises.

That which observes is called *mindfulness*, or *awareness*, that which is observed is called *movement*, and resting in that state is called *stillness*. Identify them as such and meditate! If you meditate earnestly, stable meditative experiences of the bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality of śamatha will arise in your mindstream. Consequently, when stillness, movement, and awareness merge into one and all discursive thoughts are self-knowing and self-illuminating, meditate by identifying this as awareness. And when thoughts automatically scatter in all directions, meditate by identifying this as the mind of unawareness. By doing so, in accordance with the degree of sharpness of your faculties, various meditative experiences such as bliss, luminosity, vacuity, stillness, and harshness will certainly occur. Just as it has always been in the moon's nature to wax and wane, so it is in the mind's nature to be periodically happy and sad. So without hope or fear, rejection or acceptance, negation or affirmation, do not lose your own grounding in that very luminosity and cognizance. [472] This is a crucial point. Meditative experiences and appearances disappear by themselves, fading away, unable to sustain themselves, like illusions and dreams, so recognize this. If you cherish, refute or affirm, hope

or fear, or become attached to or fixate on experiences such as bliss, luminosity, vacuity, harshness, dreams, or subtle extrasensory perception, this will lead you toward errors and obscurations, so recognize this.

Now I have heard elders say that meditation is the fine path of the buddhas, so after giving this careful thought, I concluded that maybe this was something that could be seen with the eyes, held in the hands, or heard with the ears. And if those old monks could get it, then I should certainly be able to do so, too! So I went to a remote, solitary region, leaned my back against a red boulder, and spent three days staring in front of me. While I was asleep on the evening of the final day, a white child appeared to me and asked, “Why are you sitting here?” I replied, “I’m sitting here wondering whether I might see something like meditation.” The child closed his eyes and then sang this song:

Hey, hey!

You, blind one, who wishes to enter the authentic path, listen!

The body is like a paper bag blown by the wind.

Speech is like the sound of air passing through a pipe. [473]

This mind is the creator of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

Among these three, identify which is primary!

You have a long time to wait before you’ll see or hear something called
meditation.

With those words, I woke up.

Then I gave this some thought and determined the mind to be primary, but I didn’t know what to do next. So a few days later in a nighttime dream, a yogin claiming to be Orgyen Lake-Born Vajra placed a vase on my head and said, “The obscurations of your youthful body have been purified, and with this vase empowerment your body has matured into a nirmāṇakāya. I anoint you as my regent. Now you must diligently investigate the origin from which this mind first arose, the location where it abides in the interim, and the destination to which it finally goes. Meditation is just that!” Then he seemed to dissolve into me.

On another night in a dream, a red yogin claiming to be Orgyen Speech Vajra said, “Son, focus your mind firmly on me. Forcefully cut off all thoughts.” As a result of doing this, thoughts flowed forth uninterruptedly, so I told him my mind wasn’t capable.

“Are you aware of their outflow?” he asked. [474]

“I am,” I replied.

“Well, such thoughts are called *movement*. That which understands them is called *awareness*. Remaining in that understanding is called *stillness*. Never be separated from these three!”

With these words he poured ambrosia from a skull cup and said, “With this secret empowerment, your speech has matured into the speech vajra.” Then he seemed to dissolve into me.

Then, after three years had passed, in a dream a young woman placed thirteen white mustard seeds on a bright, clear mirror and said, “Son, hold this mirror to your heart. These mustard seeds are an omen and portent indicating that in the future, your disciples will become vidyādhara.” Placing it on my heart, she sang this song:

How wonderful!

Son of the clear-light vajra essence, your own mind is the basis of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

The origin from which it first emerges is empty.

The location in which it resides in the interim is empty.

The destination to which it finally goes is empty.

Perceive the essential nature of emptiness!

It has no form, shape, color, or source.

It is neither one nor many, and it is neither emanated nor reabsorbed.

It transcends the parameters of existence and nonexistence.

It is empty of the conventional words of negation and affirmation.

It is spontaneously actualized [475] as great emptiness.

It is a mirror that transcends causes and conditions and is able to give rise to all manner of reflections.

Whatever light or dark colors arise, the character of its essential nature is unchanging.

This is an analogy for the mind and pristine awareness.

Do not regard the mind and pristine awareness as two grounds.

Do not mistake pristine awareness for the mind!

The mind refers to something projected by pristine awareness.

The night does not occur during the daytime, and the day does not occur during the nighttime.

Space does not turn into either one.

Distinguish between the mind and pristine awareness in this way.
Observing one thought after another is the path for achieving śamatha, but you
don't enter the authentic path.
Moreover, sustaining your own consciousness of luminosity and cognizance
allows for thoughts to release themselves.
But you don't directly get to the point.
Identify the ground pristine awareness!
O child of wisdom and pristine awareness, the secret treasury of the ḍākinīs is
your inheritance!

With those words she dissolved, together with the mirror, into my heart, and my
body, speech, and mind were filled with joy and bliss. Those [words] were my
rationale, so once again I ardently meditated on luminosity and cognizance.
Consequently, at times it seemed as if that which appeared and that which was
aware nondually dispersed outward [476] and then converged inward again. On
other occasions, that which appeared and that which was aware were nondually
and spontaneously objectified and then naturally disappeared. At other times
appearances and awareness were nondually self-emergent and self-dissolving,
such that I understood that they were not projected out from within the body. I
knew that these experiences were attributable to grasping at the ground of being
as an object.

Then all my earlier ways of grasping naturally faded away, and I came to rest
in the great, spontaneous vastness of the originally pure ground of being. All
things that arose as its creative expressions naturally released themselves in their
own expanse. This essential nature — together with its creative expressions,
which are free of modification, antidote, meditation practice, memory, grasping,
and identification — is called *path pristine awareness*. At that time, with the
absence of mental activity, there was ultimate reality. As hopes, fears, negation,
and affirmation dissolved into absolute space, there was self-emergent
primordial consciousness. Without seeking, there was the spontaneously
actualized essential nature of reality and the mode of being of the great
dharmakāya, free of all extremes, partiality, going, and coming.

Like the sun rising in the space of the sky, free of contamination, primordial
consciousness, pristine awareness, awakened in the nature of its own
unmodified, self-emergent ground, and all the appearances of its creative
expressions released themselves without being modified or transformed in any
way. Such natural liberation is illustrated [477] by the analogy of the nonduality

of the sun and its rays. The substrate, as the essential nature of the mind, is darkness like the night; thoughts arise as dualistic grasping at the apprehender and the apprehended; and the close identification with joy and sorrow is like the reification of a dream as being truly existent.

It is not in the essential nature of the sky to change throughout the course of the day and night, but its manifest nature is affected by the sun. Likewise, in terms of its essential nature, the mind does not change, but a distinction is made between pristine awareness and the mind, based on the distinction between primordial consciousness and ignorance. The ground is the basis from which all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa emerges, just as a mirror enables all manner of reflections to appear.

On one hand, all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa consists of creative expressions of the ground, which in their own essential nature are primordially perfect. On the other hand, I think it is contradictory for these creative expressions to be wholly present at some times and to disappear at other times. Some people say that thoughts are moments of pristine awareness and that both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are wholly present in them. Others label mere self-knowing, self-illuminating thoughts as genuine pristine awareness. Still others say that luminosity and cognizance are the Great Perfection, like a flash of lightning. However, I think that it is incorrect to say that whatever thoughts arise, with the completion of each one, [478] all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is wholly present and disappears — for all thoughts are to be released. If that were not so, with the transient arising and passing of thoughts, it is clear that saṃsāra and nirvāṇa would be born and die too often! Know that the self-releasing appearances of the creative expressions [of pristine awareness] slip right into the essential nature, dissolving back into the primordial womb, like the ocean's waves that naturally subside back into the ocean, without going anywhere.

Although I practiced in that way, when I encountered even a minor issue, I would lose my own grounding in the nature of existence and revert to ordinary states. For example, when I was alone and naked in the wilderness, if I were to become frightened when various ferocious animals and savages let out terrifying roars, I would be no different than an ordinary person. In that case, there would be no way I could be liberated in the intermediate period by way of such meditation. But with heartfelt faith and reverence I prayed to my guru, the Lake-Born Vajra, “Please grant me right now practical instructions for handling such circumstances!” Falling asleep with immense devotion, in a dream I had a vision of Orgyen Dorjé Drolö¹⁶³ appearing from an expanse of blazing fire and

light, and he chanted the lyrics of this *Hūṃ* song: [479]

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Supreme being, Vajra of Pristine Awareness,

Hūṃ Hūṃ! do you understand the common thread of the three realms of
saṃsāra

Hūṃ Hūṃ! as dualistic grasping at the apprehender and the apprehended?

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Do you understand both the object and the subject

Hūṃ Hūṃ! as two thoughts?

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Do you understand the joys and sorrows of this life and future lives

Hūṃ Hūṃ! as delusive experiences?

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Do you understand daytime appearances, nighttime appearances,
the physical world, and its sentient inhabitants

Hūṃ Hūṃ! as experiences of light and dark?

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Do you understand the joys, sorrows, environment, and friends of
this life

Hūṃ Hūṃ! as dream experiences and delusive appearances,

Hūṃ Hūṃ! and know that they are equally unreal?

Hūṃ Hūṃ! As vast as the physical world and its sentient inhabitants are,

Hūṃ Hūṃ! they do not extend beyond the expanse of space.

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Although space has no periphery or center,

Hūṃ Hūṃ! it does not extend beyond the expanse of pristine awareness.

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Buddhafiels and excellent buddhas

Hūṃ Hūṃ! are the face of your own ground, the nature of existence.

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Do not mistake the buddhas as being autonomous.

Hūṃ Hūṃ! I shall cut off the errors of the māras above.

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Enemies, demons, bad companions, and your surroundings

Hūṃ Hūṃ! are delusive experiences of conceptual, dualistic grasping.

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Do not regard them as anything other than reification.

Hūṃ Hūṃ! I shall destroy the errors of the māras below.

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Daytime and dream appearances

Hūṃ Hūṃ! are reified and clung to as names and things. [480]

Hūṃ Hūṃ! Even though you know emptiness for yourself,

Hūṃ Hūṃ! do you understand thoughts as aspects of your own nature?

Hūṃ Hūṃ! While you understand all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa

Hūṃ Hūṃ! as the primordial expanse of the absolute space of the ground,

Hūṃ Hūṃ! do you understand them as nondual displays [of pristine awareness]?
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Appearances of these creative expressions slip into the essential nature of uniform pervasiveness,
Hūṃ Hūṃ! releasing themselves into that expanse.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Do you understand that there is no practice of meditation?
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Inwardly there is the bondage of grasping at the “I.”
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Outwardly there is grasping and clinging to objects.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Meditation in between is immaterial.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Do you understand that the gateways of
Hūṃ Hūṃ! outer and inner conditions obscure the face
Hūṃ Hūṃ! of the Great Perfection of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa?
Hūṃ Hūṃ! First, by investigating, understanding will come.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Next, by meditating, experiences will arise.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Finally, by resting, realization will come.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Once realization has occurred, it is nondual with simultaneous liberation.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Objects and subjects together
Hūṃ Hūṃ! are awakened in the mother’s space of the great expanse.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! My emanations and I
Hūṃ Hūṃ! have never been separated.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Their essential nature is the illusion of my own creative expressions.
Hūṃ Hūṃ! Like the dissolution of the apparitions of an illusionist,
Hūṃ Hūṃ! they are nondual in absolute space. *Phaṭ Phaṭ!*

With those words he became nondual with me, and an experience arose of my great appearances pervading all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. From that time onward, [481] due to this sign, I knew that these were pith instructions for collapsing the false cave of appearances.

To expand on this just a little, (1) seek out the source of names, (2) destroy grasping at the permanence of things, and (3) collapse the false cave, which is primordially liberated within your own mindstream, by knowing and realizing all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

1. *Seek Out the Source of Names*

By investigating and analyzing the tenacious grasping of saying the name “I” and grasping at the thought “I am,” you find that the basis of designation of everything — including the flesh, blood, and bones, throughout the exterior and interior of the body, and from the crown of the head down to the soles of the feet — is nonobjective and empty. Then continue to expose the error by also seeking out each of the specific names of the head, feet, arms, joints, and so on. As for the way to investigate all manners of establishing names and conventions in the external environment, by seeking out the name *house*, for example, in terms of its exterior, interior, upper, and lower areas, and its clay, stones, and so on, it disappears by itself. Earth becomes pottery; and the names of the upper and lower sections of stones, the tops and bottoms of trees, and so forth naturally disappear from where they are, and through transformation and modification they become water mills, stoves, pillars, and beams. Water becomes tea, fire becomes the flame of a butter lamp, air becomes a gust in a bellows, and so on. Reveal the fallacy in each of these cases that the bases of designation of such transformations, cessations, and disappearances [482] cannot be ascertained.

2. **Destroy Grasping At the Permanence of Things**

If whatever is established as an entity is definitely, truly existent and permanent in its own nature, it must be replete with seven qualities, namely: invulnerability, indestructibility, reality, incorruptibility, stability, total unobstructability, and total invincibility. Even though things resemble this in seeming to be firm, heavy, solid, existent, and permanent, if all houses, earth, stone, fire, and water were destroyed, controlled, blown out, and dispersed, they would suddenly vanish like a dream or an illusion. Fathom this by ascertaining them as emptiness, devoid of inherent nature.

In general, the whole physical world and its sentient inhabitants, with all their forms, colors, shapes, and appearances that arise from the five elements, are empty of their own identities, disappearing into the expanse of space like clouds and mist. But even if you know that they are primordially empty from their own side, if you do not recognize them as subjects and objects of dualistic thinking, there is no benefit or harm. Like a beggar eyeing someone else’s treasure chest, your knowledge is useless and trivial.

3. *Collapse the False Cave*

If you have understanding, experience, and realization of the manner in which saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are not other than your own mind, this is a profound and potent point. Nevertheless, [483] release your mind there, in its own essential nature, loose and free, and investigate all of it — its periphery, center, beginning, and end. By doing so, if it can't be established as anything, and if you carefully analyze and investigate how big and spatially pervasive it is, you will see all the three realms of the physical world and its sentient inhabitants as a totality within the all-pervasive expanse of space. If you do not know that and determine it, ascertain that all kinds of realms of saṃsāra are delusive experiences and are not even remotely established as truly existent. With respect to a single fluid, hell beings see it as lava, *pretas* see it as pus and blood, animals see it as drink, humans see it as water, devas see it as ambrosia, and so on. For each, it arises as that one's perception and experience but bears no true existence of its own.

Now sentient beings seem to perish due to little things such as weapons, yet the heat and cold of the hells and the hunger and thirst of the *pretas* do not kill those beings. This fact reveals the fallacy of their true existence, as they are nothing more than mere delusive appearances and experiences. If you examine the causes and conditions, such as a blacksmith who forges the burning iron ground and buildings and creates the flames and firewood of hell, you must recognize that these are merely delusive appearances having no true existence. Moreover, [484] where is the ripening of the vices and karma of the masters and workers in hell? If there is no ripening of karma for them, why should anyone else have to experience it? If you examine these points, you will ascertain that from their own side they are like the appearances of a dream, apart from their mere duration.

Ascertain that all sentient beings subject to their own dualistic grasping involving the “I” and “my” subject and object are under the domination of the delusive cycle of the three realms of existence. Like a body and its shadow, they hold their ground relative to the objects of their own thoughts. This is an enduring process of habitually adhering closely to those various objects. Even during dreams at night, don't you reify and identify with the objects of earth, water, fire, air, and space, as well as all buildings, relatives, friends, loved ones, and all manner of sentient beings, not to mention all fears, joys, and sorrows — just as you do in the daytime? If you successively examine all the periods of years, months, and days that have gone by, and all your surroundings, friends,

loved ones, possessions, and houses, they are no different from subtle and coarse dreams. Moreover, there is not the slightest bit of difference between the 360 daytime appearances and 360 nighttime appearances of one year, apart from the mere degree of subtlety and coarseness of those experiences.¹⁶⁴ Where do the subjects and objects [485] of daytime appearances go at night? The subjects and objects of nighttime appearances are nowhere to be found during the daytime. Look to see if they are hidden somewhere, and you will find that they are alike — they are not other than your own mind.

Observe that the difference between the birth and death of sentient beings in a dream and the birth and death of sentient beings that appear in the daytime is a matter of delusive appearances and experiences. Even though you recognize the phenomenal world as consisting of mental apparitions, if you grasp at the deluded agent as being internal and the delusive appearances as being external — like an illusion and an illusionist or a dream and a dreamer — you are tightly bound by chains of dualistic grasping. Instead, know that the conceptualized self that is grasped as “I” and all its aspects that are established as the external physical world and its internal sentient inhabitants are arising within the expanse of the all-pervasive essential nature of the mind, devoid of a center and periphery. They do not exist beyond the expanse of that essential nature, just as the reflections in a mirror do not exist beyond the face of the mirror.

Moreover, wherever you transmigrate and take birth within the three realms of existence, you do not proceed to new places after leaving the earlier ones behind. Rather, like daytime appearances and dream appearances, one experience of delusive appearances becomes another; therefore, come to the certain recognition that saṃsāra [486] consists of delusive experiences. Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are wholly present as your own perceptions, and they are wholly included within the expanse of the essential nature. This essential nature is called the *ground*. The unaware aspect of the ground is called the *substrate*, and its pure aspect is called the *dharmakāya*. Due to its being exhausted in the darkness of unawareness, this very primordial ground, like space, which enables all appearances to arise, is the substrate. The appearing aspect of dualistic conceptualization manifests as the delusive experiences of displays of the three realms.

The essential nature of the ground is like the essential nature of space, which is not transformed by the day and night, does not turn into anything else, and enables the appearances of light and darkness. Accordingly, it is called Samantabhadra, devoid of the good and bad. Its manifest nature delusively

appears as the mind, but within the inner glow of the womb, it is self-emergently established as the ground of the five facets of primordial consciousness, the five kāyas, and the five buddhafiels. Therefore, it is great, connate primordial consciousness. The deities and buddhafiels of nirvāṇa are also spontaneously, wholly present in your own ground, so buddhafiels, as well as autonomous deities who move to or are born into one realm after another, are nothing more than dualistic appearances and experiences. For those who err in this regard, even if they actualize the jñānasattvas, they have no basis or root for transcending mundane existence. Once the root that appears in this way is penetrated and severed, [487] and not merely scrutinized, from then onward reification and clinging must naturally be severed as well.

When you are on the path, do not engage in even the slightest bit of intellectual examination of the mere nature of existence. Without any investigation, analysis, meditative practice, modification, or alteration, relax within yourself in the essential nature. By loosely and completely resting there, appearances of creative expressions will naturally flow forth, releasing themselves. This is called *illumination by primordial consciousness of the face of the Great Perfection of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa*.

All modification, alteration, hope, fear, doubt, negation, affirmation, grasping, exertion, investigation, and analysis are imputed by the intellect, and the intellect is not ultimate. The ultimate transcends the intellect, so you must know this critical point. When you are utterly settled, you may fall into error, and while you are present in the aspect of emptiness, thoughts may become hidden, beyond the scope of the creative expressions of pristine awareness. In this case, I say that thoughts become ethically neutral in the boundary between the mind and pristine awareness. Not veering away from the nature of existence of the Great Perfection of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is a sublime and utterly crucial point. With it, all gods and demons and all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are liberated within themselves, with no distinction of good and bad.

On the occasion of extinction into ultimate reality, all such appearances subside into their own inner luminosity — like the dissolution of illusory apparitions, [488] or the moon in an empty sky vanishing into space — and it is as if the crystal light of unobscured primordial consciousness subsides within. From your own perspective, activities for the sake of others are effortless. The radiance from the inner glow of the expanse manifests as the naturally unimpeded five kāyas and five buddhafiels, and from them the creative expressions of compassionate nirmāṇakāyas are self-emergent teachers who are

the disciples' own perceptions.

Since I have not entered the treasury of hearing and reflection and have not served even one sublime spiritual mentor, I am not skilled in composition, so please do not be dismayed with me!

Hey, hey!

In originally pure absolute space, free of extremes,
in the spontaneously actualized display of the palace of clear light,
from the nature of nondual bliss and emptiness
the connate embodiments of pristine awareness, Padmasambhava and
Prahevajra,
are not mentally projected but are the face of the nature of existence itself.
From a state of nonexertion I naturally meet them
and receive the inheritance of the treasury of the expanse of ultimate reality.
Do not mistake these practical instructions for fantastic songs sung in the
marketplace!

Do not ruin yourself in order to slay others.

Human life is like the melting sun at dusk,

so do not engage in acts of deception, which ruin you and others.

The proliferation of scholarly acts of erudition involving lists and calculations
[489]

is the threshold of pride, conceit, and false views.

Either because the achievement of liberation occurs within your own mindstream
or because the root of all Dharmas stems from your own mindstream,
after you have spiritually matured, of course this will benefit others as well.

Once we have investigated our own foolish mindstreams,
we do not hope that our water-drop will be able to relieve others.

If we observe the five poisons, the attachments, and the aversions of our own
mindstreams,

we do not hope that our compounded toxins will be nurturing medicines to
protect others.

Hey, hey!

If you rest without modification in self-emergent pristine awareness,
the creator of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is released in this one way.

So do not seek the root of practical instructions elsewhere,

and abandon every hope of achieving or acquiring results.
If you investigate the causal process of this and future lives and of days and
nights,
they are found to be delusive experiences of dualistic thoughts.
So reveal the fallacy of the habitual propensity for mistakenly clinging to them
as being autonomous.
Deeply and decisively fathom the full import of hearing and reflection.
Be skeptical of contrived meditations in which discursive thoughts are welcomed
and followed.
Don't be like those pathetic contemplatives who are caught in the middle,
where the face of the nature of existence, the sun of the Great Perfection,
is hidden by the clouds of deviations and obscurations of dualistic grasping.
When I observe the many fluctuations of thoughts,
I burst into laughter [490] at the hope for the Great Perfection in them.

Hey, hey!

Do not look for autonomous buddhas
apart from the essential nature, having no boundaries, of the originally pure,
primordial ground.
All the false patterns of delusive experiences, externally and internally, of the
physical world and its sentient inhabitants
are wholly present in the expanse of the essential nature:
this is our "Great Perfection"!
In the unchanging, all-pervasive realm of bliss and emptiness
arises the totality of displays of the vast, all-encompassing expanse,
where the sun of clear light rises without setting.
Within an invulnerable fortress, a spontaneously actualized palace,
this useless old man, as an embodiment of pristine awareness of ultimate reality,
holds his own ground on an unshakable throne
of inseparable skillful means and wisdom, resting upon the corpses of mental
afflictions.
I don't understand due to explanations, nor do I realize due to teachings.
My teacher is the Lake-Born Vajra,
who granted me a cherished treasure of the inheritance of the Enlightened View
Lineage,¹⁶⁵

which has no presentation or lists of the grounds and paths.
I take the essential nature as the path — that is my patrilineal Dharma.
I am not bound by the reification of visualizations, recitations, worship, and
 accomplishment,
for my way is one of nonmeditation, nonworship, and nonaccomplishment.
My own grounding, transcending the intellect, is infinite, with no boundaries,
without antidotes, modifications, alterations, or intellectual imputations, and
uncontaminated by anything to observe, [491] maintain, or investigate.
Having released into openness — unstructured, without fabrication or referential
 object,
in the yoga of inactivity, transcending good and bad, hope and fear, rejection and
 acceptance —
there was wide-open clarity, with nothing to do.
In the self-emergent expanse of originally present primordial consciousness,
by transforming into the unmodified nature of loose release,
the knots of dualistic grasping were directly dissolved.
Once saṃsāra and nirvāṇa were purified as the dharmakāya,
the bonds of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa were cut from my heart.
Once the darkness of unawareness vanished into empty awareness,
the stake of attachment and clinging was wrenched up from its base.
In the womb of unimpeded openness, the essential nature of nonobjectivity
destroyed and expelled identification with hopes and fears, joys and sorrows.
In the absolute space of emptiness, the wisdom of identitylessness
destroyed and expelled into oblivion the chains of self-grasping.
As the expansive enlightened view of Samantabhadra effortlessly flowed forth,
I leapt to the state of a spontaneously actualized vidyādhara.
May all sentient beings throughout space who see, hear, recall, or touch me
encounter their own essential nature as self-emergent kāyas of pristine
 awareness,
and definitely come to the expanse of Samantabhadra!



In response to the earnest request by the sublime guru Sönam Palden, a relative
of Dodrup Rinpoché, [492] the foolish idiot Sakutsipa Düdjom Dorjé Trolö Tsal
uttered this *Foolish Dharma of an Idiot Clothed in Mud and Feathers*.

1. This well-bestowed, unique, ultimate teaching on the vital core of the enlightened view of Samantabhadra, the essence of pith instructions concerning the effortless, supreme yāna, the Ati Great Perfection, the primordial consciousness of the dharmakāya, has been nakedly placed in your hands.
2. In order to burst the fine, pretentious bubbles of the intellectually fabricated meditations of fools, seize this all-sufficient, golden needle of pith instructions and dispense with the elaboration of a multitude of practices. O fortunate assembly, come to the ground of primordial liberation!
3. For this purpose, the king and queen of Sikkim, of divine ancestry, opened the unlocked door to a feast of sacred relics of pith instructions. You who seek liberation, come for your portion of the ambrosia that dispels misery!
4. By the power of stainless merit, may all beings become vessels for the profound and secret Great Perfection, and having dredged the depths of saṃsāra in the expanse of the extinction into ultimate reality, may the whole world come to the equal taste of great bliss of Samantabhadra!

In order to fulfill the wish of a pure practitioner, [493] Jikdral Yeshé Dorjé uttered these verses for a later edition of the text. May this serve as a cause for this precious teaching of the mind of Samantabhadra to be as enduring and pervasive as space.

Sarva maṅgalam!

161. Each day we experience 21,000 breaths, and the vital energies that flow with the breath are closely related to the arising of thoughts. Following after each one of these 21,000 energy-minds, as if you were sending a hunting dog after a fox, and then applying antidotes for expelling each one, is absurd if you can instead rest in the space of awareness, like a garuḍa that can fly from its nest.

162. See glossary.

163. Tib. *o rgyan rdo rje gro lod*. Dorjé Drolö is one of the eight archetypal manifestations of Padmasambhava. As for the literal meaning of the name, if *gro* is an abbreviation of *gro khog*, meaning belly, and *lod* is a variation of *glod*, meaning “loose,” then this name could be rendered “Loose-Bellied Vajra.”

164. The Tibetan calendar has just 360 days in a year.

165. Tib. *rgyal ba dgongs pa'i brgyud*. The term *dgongs pa* is the honorific form of *bsam pa*, which means

“thought” or “intention.” However, according to Gangteng Tulku Rinpoché, in the context of these teachings it is the honorific form of *lta ba*, which means “view” or “perspective.”

166. This colophon is by Dūdjom Rinpoché, who edited this text for publication.

The Enlightened View of Samantabhadra

A Profound Treasure of the Expanse of the Originally Pure Great Perfection
Sealed Teachings of Pith Instructions Offering a Complete Synthesis of the
Enlightened View Lineage, the Symbolic Lineage, and the Aural Lineage A
Lucid Presentation, Laid in the Palm of the Hand, of the Enlightened View of
Samantabhadra, the Unmodified, Perfect, Self-Emergent Buddha *by*

Düdjom Lingpa



[514] MAY THE KĒYAS of pristine awareness of immutable ultimate reality, the sugatagarbha Samantabhadra and his queen, reign victorious in the lotus of my mind! This profound pith instruction on the clear-light Great Perfection, the complete synthesis of the profound Dharma of the Enlightened View Lineage, the Symbolic Lineage, and the Aural Lineage, is an oral transmission, not of a human being but of the self-appearing teacher. Once this ocean of ambrosia had been poured into the fine vase of my mind, I feared that it would be lost, so I sought permission from the vīras and ḍākinīs to put this into writing, as an inheritance to liberate future holders of the lineage.

In my twenty-seventh year, on the evening of the tenth day of the twelfth lunar month of the dog year,¹⁶⁷ [515] all my perceptions dissolved into the realm of the great, originally pure absolute space of phenomena, and I recognized my own ground. After some time there spontaneously arose the following visionary appearance of the teacher and his retinue. On this occasion of the perfect time of originally pure equality, in the perfect place of the realm of the self-appearing, true, great Akaniṣṭha, the perfect teacher, the Buddha of the primordial ground, Samantabhadra, the Lake-Born Vajra, sat upon a jeweled lotus throne supported by eight lions. To the assembly of the perfect retinue of vīras and ḍākinīs, free of concepts, surrounding the teacher, [516] he taught the perfect Dharma of the unsurpassed resultant yāna — the profound and secret Great Perfection.

At that time there was gathered in that abode an entire assembly of 84,000 beings, including these bodhisattva mahāsattvas: Vajra of Pristine Awareness, Faculty Displaying All Appearances, Faculty of Afflictive Mentation, Faculty of Mentation, Faculty of Vision, Faculty of Hearing, Faculty of Smell, Faculty of Taste, [517] Faculty of Touch, and the All-Creating Sovereign.

Phase 1: Taking the Impure Mind as the Path

Then Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Sovereign Faculty Displaying All Appearances rose from his seat and addressed the Bhagavān as follows: “Bhagavān Samantabhadra, King of Immutable Light, please listen and consider my words. In order to completely liberate all of us [constituting] this apparitional display of disciples simultaneously in the great expanse of equality of the absolute space of phenomena, [518] please reveal the resultant, unsurpassed yāna of the Great

Perfection.”

The Bhagavān replied, “O you apparitional display of disciples, listen! I do not proclaim this fruitional, unsurpassed yāna of the Great Perfection upwind of anyone other than those individuals with [suitable] karma and good fortune, endowed with the combined qualities of sharp faculties, great wisdom, stable faith, the ability to keep their samayas, great enthusiasm, and courage. Why is this? As a result of not practicing the ultimate and yet abandoning the profound truth of cause and effect, sentient beings will experience the great misery of hell. This is why I do not proclaim it.”

Then Bodhisattva Sovereign Faculty Displaying All Appearances replied, “O Teacher, Bhagavān, we of this apparitional display do not depart from the nature of nonduality, so please reveal the profound and secret unsurpassed yāna.”

At that time and on that occasion, I heard the following: The Bhagavān of the primordial ground said to the apparitional display of disciples, “O apparitional display of disciples, listen without distraction! Without seeking causes or effects elsewhere, identify the agent who roams within the three realms of saṃsāra, and hold fast to the instructions for liberating this being.” [519]

When he spoke those words, the all-accomplishing Faculty of Mentation replied, “That agent is I. The body and speech that depend on me are mutable.”

The teacher replied, “O Faculty of Mentation, tell me about your form, shape, and color.”

Faculty of Mentation answered, “I am formless emptiness. I definitely transcend shape and color.”

The Bhagavān asked, “O Faculty of Mentation, what is the origin from which you first arose, the location in which you dwell in the interim, and the destination to which you will finally go?”

Faculty of Mentation replied, “I am unarisen emptiness, so there is no origin from which I arose. I am nonlocal emptiness, so there is no place where I am located. I am unestablished emptiness, so there is no destination to which I will go. Everyone assembled here is none other than I, so may the Teacher please reveal the profound instructions for liberating me.” [520]

The Bhagavān replied, “O apparitional display of disciples, listen! Now it is crucial for you to know your own causal characteristics. There are two kinds of paths: Individuals with supreme faculties proceed within themselves by way of direct crossing over, and individuals with middling or inferior faculties proceed gradually, in dependence upon the grounds and paths. To investigate this, first of

all merge your mind with empty, external space and remain in meditative equipoise for twenty days. By so doing, individuals of the first type will perceive the originally pure essential nature of the primordial ground with the eye of wisdom, and they will identify this within themselves.

“Individuals of the latter two types will be tormented by confusion and distress, and since their minds do not seem to merge with space, they will pass the time in fabrications and striving, while becoming caught up in many thoughts. Here is the way for them to enter upon the grounds and paths. They should practice by abiding in consciousness and recognizing the movements of thoughts, as follows: Like people watching a show of optical illusions, by meditating diligently with keen enthusiasm, all the subtle and coarse assemblies of thoughts [521] will be *calmed* in the ocean of the primordial ground, they will abide in a state of unwavering *stillness*, and there will arise the experience of *śamatha*.¹⁶⁸ At this time there will arise bliss like the warmth of a fire, luminosity like the breaking of dawn, and nonconceptuality like an ocean unmoved by waves.

“The *vivid perception* of mindfulness that does not bifurcate stillness and movement in that state is called *vipaśyanā*.¹⁶⁹ When you have identified *śamatha* as a meditative experience and then naturally sustain it with mindfulness, free of attachment and clinging, the appearances of meditative experiences will naturally vanish, and single-pointed mindfulness will manifest.

“O apparitional display of disciples, listen! At this time, some people experience a soothing sense of bliss. Others experience wind disorders, such that whatever thoughts come to mind arouse an uncomfortable sensation, as if their heart had been pierced, and sporadic illnesses certainly arise. By placing their hopes in gods, fearing demonic influences, experiencing everyone they see and touch as harmful, and so on, various kinds of harsh experiences definitely arise. Some people remain in a state of blank vacuity, while visions of gods, demons, and varieties of extrasensory perceptions arise for others. For some these are true, [522] while for others they are false, so they are not reliable. If you relish such experiences and go out of your way to cultivate them and cling to them, they will act as a great weight holding you down in *saṃsāra* and plunging you into the mire of the miserable states of existence. So beware of this!

“Recognizing meditative experiences for what they are, remain without hope or fear, and sustain the flow of mindfulness. By doing so, these meditative experiences disappear by themselves, coarse thoughts naturally subside, consciousness rests in a spacious and loose state, and without doing anything to

modify all the roving thoughts that arise, your consciousness is sealed. This is called *self-liberated mindfulness*.¹⁷⁰

“At this time a strong sense of bliss may arise, and this too can be simply a pitfall. All related illnesses arise from bile, and by recognizing them, they will disperse. If you sustain mindfulness while naturally settling your mind without hopes, fears, craving, or attachment to meditative experiences, these experiences will vanish by themselves. Then, without mindfulness even being aware of itself, as a result of the subtlety of this mode of apprehension, you remain in a wakeful vacuity devoid of roving thoughts, which is the ethically neutral substrate. This is called *collapsing into empty mindfulness*.

“At this time the mental affliction of delusion arises, and illnesses from phlegm disorders may arise. By recognizing them, too, as meditative experiences and simply letting them be, [523] without reifying them with hopes and fears, these experiences will naturally vanish. A sense of luminosity will manifest in this vacuity, and with the cessation of roving thoughts, activities and speech will become indistinct and muddled. At this time there is a prominent sense of bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality, and indeterminate visions of gods and demons may arise. These are expressions of the luminosity of the substrate consciousness, so this is called *self-illuminating mindfulness*. Both of these [kinds of mindfulness] entail views that propel you to rebirth as a god who lacks discernment, so recognize the importance of not becoming constantly absorbed in them.

“O apparitional display of disciples, listen! These kinds of mindfulness occur when taking the aspects of the mind as the path, but if you get stuck there and regard them as the supreme view and meditation, you will not rise above the states of the three realms of existence. If you get caught up in bliss, this will propel you to rebirth as a god of the desire realm; if you get caught up in luminosity, this will propel you to rebirth as a god of the form realm; and if you get caught up in nonconceptuality, this will propel you to rebirth in the formless realm. All these meditative experiences are not to be blocked, nor are they to be cultivated. They are indispensable, for they arise as portents of the grounds and paths. [524]

“Moreover, upon recognizing various kinds of illnesses and suffering as meditative experiences of those who have entered the grounds and paths, let them be, without reifying them or trying to alter them. As a result they are released right where they are, like mist disappearing into the sky. In general, all the joys and sorrows of the six classes of sentient beings are merely delusive

appearances, without a single one being truly existent.”

Phase 2: Revealing Your Own Face as the Sharp Vajra of Vipāśyanā

Then Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness rose from his seat and joined his palms in reverence to the Bhagavān, saying, “Bhagavān, Omnipresent Lord and Immutable Sovereign, please listen and consider my words. Please reveal the profound, authentic path to this apparitional display of disciples.”

He replied, “O Vajra of Pristine Awareness, the ultimate path, called the *vajra essence*, is unsurpassed. No one will encounter this gateway without having accumulated great merit and the karmic momentum of the power of fine prayers for incalculable eons in the past. This is [rare] like an udumbara blossom. It is the path followed by the buddhas of the past and entered upon by the buddhas of the present, [525] and it is the only profound path that will be followed by the buddhas of the future. I shall explain it well, so listen!

“In this regard, there are two kinds of pristine awareness: the path pristine awareness and pristine awareness that is present in the ground. As for the first, the path pristine awareness, its essential nature is to forge the path. Its essential nature, which is the originally pure expanse of the absolute space of phenomena, free of extremes, is self-illuminated by all-pervasive great wisdom. Such pristine awareness is ineffable.

“In this regard there is the threefold view, meditation, and conduct. What are these three? The view has no viewpoint; the meditation is without any mode of apprehension; and the conduct is without any modification.

“There is also the threefold ground, path, and fruition: the ground is great, primordial freedom; the path is the great letting be; and the fruition is great, natural liberation.

“The spontaneous perfection of the three kāyas is like this: the originally pure essential nature of the dharmakāya; the manifest nature of the spontaneously actualized saṃbhogakāya; and the all-pervasive compassion of the nirmāṇakāya.

“Here the six perfections are simultaneously perfected as follows: nongrasping is generosity, nonconfusion is ethical discipline, nonchanging is patience, nonstriving is enthusiasm, nonmeditation is meditation, and nonerring

is wisdom.

“This is [526] the self-emergent buddha. Not straying from this nature is also the real, unsurpassed taking of refuge in the nature of existence. It is also the equal liberation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, which is the real generation of bodhicitta. It is also taking the dharmakāya Samantabhadra as your guru. It is also unifying the essence of all the jinas of the three times and devoting yourself to this as your personal deity. It is also nondually synthesizing the ḍākinīs of the absolute space of primordial consciousness in the space of Samantabhadrī — which is absolute space itself — and entering her womb. This alone is the practice in which all the buddha families and maṇḍalas are subsumed as one.

“There are two ethically neutral states that are incompatible with such a profound, secret, unsurpassed path as this: one that has always been an ethically neutral state and a second that is transient and luminous. The former, which is like immaterial space, is one in which the radiance and creative expressions [of pristine awareness] are impeded. The latter is one in which luminosity appears in the vacuity, but the radiance and creative expressions [of pristine awareness] are still impeded. By recognizing these two and letting them settle in their own state, they will vanish of their own accord, so do not think about them or apply various remedies to them.¹⁷¹

“Pristine awareness is the self-emergent buddha, and by allowing it to settle in its own nature, it will be naturally released. So just let it be, without trying to modify it, [527] apprehend it, analyze it, or intellectually present it in any way. In this regard there are two states: meditative equipoise and postmeditative practice. The former entails three modes of nonmodification: motionlessly rest your body without modification like a corpse in a charnel ground, silently rest your voice without speaking, and luminously rest your mind without modification in its own place. It is crucially important to apply yourself to these three points, devoting yourself to practice without faltering throughout the three times. Postmeditative practice entails allowing all your behavior to be unmodified, while moving and resting, without diverging from your natural state.”

Phase 3: Revealing the Ground Dharmakāya

Then Vajra of Pristine Awareness asked, “O Teacher, Bhagavān, what is the cause of wandering among the three realms of saṃsāra? May the Teacher please

explain!”

He replied, “O son of the family, the basis of wandering in saṃsāra is the duality of the grasped object and grasping. That which distinguishes saṃsāra from nirvāṇa is solely grasping at the ‘I.’ Such grasping is called *grasping at the identity of a person*. The basis of designation of the ‘I’ has no root. It is like this: The head and limbs [528] are not the ‘I.’ The minor limbs and joints are not the ‘I.’ The flesh and bones are not the ‘I.’ Blood and lymph are not the ‘I.’ Bone marrow and knuckles are not the ‘I.’ Teeth and nails are not the ‘I.’ The hair on the head and body hair are not the ‘I.’ The ‘I’ does not exist in external objects, nor is it internally present in the mind, nor does the ‘I’ exist in between, in the body. Therefore, familiarize yourself with utterly dissolving the grasping at the identity of a person.

“Grasping at the identities of phenomena emerges from that [grasping at the ‘I’]. There are four approaches to this: (1) seek out the bases of designation of names, (2) destroy grasping at the permanence of things, (3) combat the fault of benefit and harm, and (4) collapse the false cave of hopes and fears.

“(1) By investigating the name of the body alone, understanding of everything else will follow. It is like this: The head is not the body. The arms are not the body. The sides of the body and the back are not the body. The legs and joints are not the body. The flesh, bones, marrow, channels, and tendons are not the body. Likewise, regarding the arms: the fingers are not the arms, nor are the forearms, upper arms, shoulders, flesh, skin, or bones. The so-called legs are not the hips, thighs, [529] calves, or toes. The so-called thighs are not the flesh, bones, marrow, channels, or tendons.

“In the same way, seek out the individual bases of designation of external objects. For instance, a house is not earth or stones, nor is it lumber or walls. In a similar fashion, by carefully examining all bases of designation, each from its own side, they vanish altogether.

“(2) This is how to investigate whether or not everything that appears to be real is truly existent: If something is definitely, truly existent, it must have all the seven indestructible vajra qualities — namely, it must be invulnerable, indestructible, real, incorruptible, stable, totally unobstructable, and invincible. Earth or stone that is established as real can be broken, pulverized, and disintegrated, and then by casting it into the sky, it will disappear without a trace. By examining all phenomena in this way, you will definitely deconstruct them with your mind, and they will vanish into emptiness.

“Consider: Where do all the physical worlds, their sentient inhabitants, and

the six kinds of sensory objects that appear like this go at night? Where do all the phenomena of the physical worlds and their sentient inhabitants that appear at night go during the daytime? [530] By examining whether they are both equally true or false, if you conclude that they are not alike, consider the following. O apparitional display of disciples, listen! During the year when you were thirteen, where did you dwell each month, each day, and each moment? What foods did you enjoy? What friends did you accompany? What words did you say? Inspect the reality of the matter. If daytime appearances are truly existent, then when this present body is cast off, where are the parents and the body of the person who goes into the hereafter? From what did they arise? Tell me!”

Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness replied, “O Teacher, Bhagavān, all appearances of the daytime, the nighttime, this life, and the hereafter are nothing more than deceptive patterns of pleasant and unpleasant experiences.”

He responded, “Well so it is, son of the family.

“(3) By examining the nature of objects that appear to bring benefit and harm, you combat the fault of clinging to true existence. Consider: Where are all the roots of virtue from the past stored? Where are they located? Whom do they benefit? How do they benefit? By likewise examining how evil, nonvirtuous karma inflicts harm, [531] you will mentally deconstruct it so that it vanishes altogether.

“Moreover, where is the source from which all malevolent demons and spirits arise? Where are they located once they have arisen? And where do they finally go? By investigating the way in which they inflict harm, you will see how there is no way that they can cause injury. In the same way, examine the location and fundamental root of the origin, location, and destination of protective gods. If the gods are empty, how can they help you as a real being? If the gods are real, where do they live? If you think they live inside mountains, consider whether they are compressed underground. On the other hand, is the earth a god — or the stones, trees, grass, or mountains? By investigating this, you will truly come to know how all joys and sorrows are nothing more than deceptive patterns of delusive experiences, that the gods do not protect anyone, and that demons and spirits harm no one.

“(4) Here is the way to collapse the false cave of misapprehending saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as being autonomous and then clinging to hopes and fears. When you travel from place to place and encounter a buddhafield and buddhas, where do they exist — in the sky, in the intervening space, on the earth, or underground? In the region of Vaiśālī, if there is a handsome king [532] with a

fine complexion, happiness, and a great retinue, he is not better than a mere *cakravartin* or a god of the desire or form realm. If buddhas have form, they must also have color, and if they have form and color, they must also have conditioned consciousness. If they have conditioned consciousness, they must also experience the six kinds of objects, and if those are present, they must also have the twelve sense bases, which would necessarily imply that they are unenlightened sentient beings. By examining this carefully, you will collapse the false cave of mistaking buddhas as being autonomous.

“Moreover, where is the fearful place and miserable realm of existence called *hell* — in the sky, in the intervening space, upon the earth, beneath it, or above it? Where is the ground of molten iron with its beings who torment the denizens of hell? Where does the firewood come from? Who are the parents, and what are the causes and conditions of the minions of hell? How is it that the fire does not scorch them while it burns others? As a result of their inflicting such torment of hellish punishment on sentient beings, to what hell do they go? As for the sentient beings who are tortured there, where do their bodies come from? [533] Who were their parents, and what were their causes and conditions? If sentient beings nowadays die from a mere wound, why don’t the denizens of hell die from being boiled and burned for eons?

“Likewise, if there are truly a vast number of pretas — with heads the size of a clay pot, mouths the size of the eye of a needle, throats the width of a horsehair, bellies the size of a country, and limbs as slender as blades of grass — who are their parents, and what are their causes and conditions? Examine the directions and places where they live. If you likewise carefully investigate all the realms of the six classes of sentient beings, you will come to the definite conclusion that they are mere dreams — your own mind’s delusive appearances, which are not established as truly existent — and you will collapse the false cave of grasping at the autonomous existence of objects.

“By determining the nature of all dualistic appearances, you will come to the definite conclusion that their essential nature is empty and nonobjective — a great openness. Their nonobjective, empty essential nature is the ground. By recognizing the ground, you will know how all of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is none other than the ground of being.”

Then Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness asked, “O Teacher, Bhagavān, how are *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* differentiated?”

He replied, “O son of the family, the inner glow of the ground *sugatagarbha* is made manifest by the deep luminosity of great wisdom, and this is called the

buddha that is present in the pure ground. [534] Once the inner glow of wisdom is obscured by ignorance, that which blends the radiance [of the sugatagarbha] with obscuration and acts as the basis of all appearances, mindsets, joys, and sorrows is called the *substrate*. With this as the basis, both subtle and coarse reifying, dualistic thoughts construct the three realms of saṃsāra.”

Phase 4: Determining the Characteristics and Qualities of the Ground

Then Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness requested of the Bhagavān, “O Teacher, Bhagavān, what is the nature and what are the sublime qualities of the Omnipresent Lord and Immutable Sovereign called the *ground sugatagarbha*? May the Bhagavān please reveal this!”

The Bhagavān replied, “O great being, listen without distraction! The unified nature of the essence of all the sugatas, the Omnipresent Lord and Immutable Sovereign, is unsurpassed. There is nothing higher. This is the great, profound absolute space of phenomena. This is peace, nirvāṇa. It is free of attachment to all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. [535] Unborn and unarisen, it is imbued with knowledge. The great perception of pure primordial consciousness is imbued with the discerning vision of all-pervasive wisdom, free of obscuration. The complete freedom of this ground, with its sublime qualities of the Great Perfection, is like this: Buddhas are not improved by goodness, and sentient beings are not contaminated by evil. There is no ignorance. Because there is no ignorance, there is no substrate. Because there is no substrate, there is no grasping at the ‘I.’ Because there is no grasping at the ‘I,’ there is no self. Because there is no self, there are no external objects, either. Because there is neither self nor objects, there is also no grasping. Because there is no grasping, there is also no conditioned consciousness.

“Son of the family, because the ground sugatagarbha does not arise within the three times, it is free of the extreme of birth. Because it never ceases and becomes nothing, it is free of the extreme of cessation. Because it does not fall into the categories of existence and reality, it is free of the extreme of permanence. Because it is not simply nonexistent, but is established as the universal ground of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, it is free of the extreme of nihilism. Because there is no origin from which it originally arose, it is free of the extreme of coming. Because there is no destination to which it finally goes, it

[536] is free of the extreme of going. Because all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is not other than the nature of the ground sugatagarbha, it is free of the extreme of diversity. Because all the phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa arise distinctly and not merged together, it is free of the extreme of unity.

“O son of the family, because the uniformly pervasive ground sugatagarbha transcends all biases and extremes, it is called the *door of liberation of emptiness*. Because this ground cannot be indicated by words, analogies, or referents of any kind, it is called the *door of liberation of signlessness*. Because the ground sugatagarbha acquires confidence within itself, and there is not the slightest desire for liberation by means of any other fruition, it is called the *door of liberation of desirelessness*.

“Son of the family, all the inexhaustible ornamental wheels¹⁷² of the enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities of all the jinas of the three times arise from the ground sugatagarbha. It is like this: All phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are unmodified and naturally empty in the nature of the ground sugatagarbha, so they are *dharma*. Ultimate reality is not empty of materiality; but rather, all facets of primordial consciousness and sublime qualities of enlightenment are spontaneously actualized in it, as if it were a composite of them, so it is called *kāya*.¹⁷³ In the ground sugatagarbha, [537] all the inexhaustible ornamental wheels of the displays of the kāyas, primordial consciousness, and buddhafiels are naturally perfected as enjoyments, so it is called *saṃbhoga*. In this, all wisdom and sublime qualities are spontaneously actualized, as if it were a composite of them, so it is called *kāya*.¹⁷⁴ Without departing from the nature of the ground sugatagarbha, since any emanation is naturally present as nothing other than [the sugatagarbha] itself, it is called *nirmāṇa*. Since all the inexhaustible ornamental wheels of the enlightened body, speech, and mind are spontaneously actualized in it, as if it were a composite of them, it is called *kāya*.¹⁷⁵ Since the three kāyas are not other than its essential nature, it is called *svabhāva*. Because it is unmodified and perfectly spontaneously actualized, it is called *kāya*.¹⁷⁶

“Since the ground of these four kāyas is unchanging, it is called *immutable*. Because it is endowed with the seven indestructible vajra qualities, it is called *vajra*. Here are its seven qualities: It is invulnerable to all mental afflictions and habitual propensities. It is indestructible by all māras and obstacles. It is by nature originally pure, so it is real. It cannot be contaminated by good or bad qualities, so it is incorruptible. It does not change from its own nature, so it is stable. It can penetrate everything, including even the subtlest of cognitive

obscurations, so it is [538] totally unobstructable. It cannot be modified by any kind of joy or sorrow, so it is totally invincible. Because this immutable vajra, which cannot be conquered or destroyed, is spontaneously actualized, as if it were a composite of all the facets of primordial consciousness and sublime qualities, it is called *kāya*.¹⁷⁷

“Sons and daughters of the family, listen well! In the self-emergent buddha, the dharmakāya, the spontaneously actualized inner glow of the sugatagarbha called the *cask of jewels*, the five buddhafiels, five buddha families, five consorts, five facets of primordial consciousness, five colors, and five wisdoms are naturally perfect, without modification. First, here is how the ground is spontaneously actualized as the nature of the five buddhafiels. The buddhafield of Ghanavyūha refers not to an objective physical world and its sentient inhabitants but to the spontaneous formation of the essential nature of the ground sugatagarbha, the absolute space of phenomena. In the absence of any cardinal or intermediate directions that can be identified as substantially existent, its placement in the center is a mere convention.

“The great absolute space of the ground is the buddhafield of Abhirati, which refers to its aspect of great bliss, and not to a region that is created by objective conditions or by some being. It is said to be in the east, but this is a mere convention, not to be taken literally.

“Since all the splendor and bountiful, sublime qualities of enlightenment are [539] self-emergent in the ground, it is called the buddhafield of Śrīmat. This bounty of sublime qualities is nominally said to be in the south, but that is a mere convention.

“The buddhafield of Sukhāvatī is so called because this appearance of the ground transcends all miserable suffering. Its placement in the west is merely nominal.

“The buddhafield of Karmaprasiddhi is so called because all the inexhaustible ornamental wheels of the kāyas, facets of primordial consciousness, buddhafiels, and displays are effortlessly perfected as they emerge of themselves. That, too, is merely nominally said to be in the north.

“References to the directions and buddhafiels artificially point to ultimate reality, which is devoid of objective characteristics and words. References concerning that which is to be purified and the means of purification are made simply for the sake of disciples who mistakenly grasp at autonomous existence and who rely on causal methods in order to be liberated in the absolute space of the fruitional great wisdom.

“O son of the family, here is how the ground — self-emergent great primordial consciousness — is wholly present in the essential nature of the five buddha families. The buddha family is so called because the sugatagarbha, the absolute space of phenomena, is free of conceptual elaboration. The vajra family is so called because the ground cannot be conquered or destroyed. The jewel family is so called because all sublime qualities are wholly present in the appearances of the ground. [540] The lotus family is so called because the ground is undefiled by all causal conditions and habitual propensities. The karma family is so called because all enlightened activities are completely accomplished without work or effort in the ground.

“Without being established as anything partial, the ground sugatagarbha is the buddha, free of signs and names — this is ultimate. The path of skillful means artificially points to it in accordance with saṃsāra as something relying on causes in order to achieve results — this is relative.

“O son of the family, here is how the essential nature of the ground sugatagarbha, primordial great emptiness, is artificially presented as the five consorts. Buddhaḍākinī is so called because the ground sugatagarbha is like a pregnant mother in the expanse of the space of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Vajraḍākinī is so called because ground absolute space is absolute space itself, free of movement and change through the three times. Ratnaḍākinī is so called because in the appearances of the ground, it is self-emergent ultimate reality itself, in which sublime qualities are spontaneously actualized. Padmaḍākinī is so called because the ground is absolute space, free of attachment. Karmaḍākinī is so called because it is absolute space itself, which is free of activity and effort and in which enlightened activities are thoroughly accomplished.

“The term *consort* refers to boundless great emptiness — self-emergent absolute space, in which the buddhafiels and five buddha families are synthesized as one in the ground. The consorts are only nominally designated, [541] for they are not established as separate — this is ultimate.

“O son of the family, this very ground is said to be of the nature of the five facets of primordial consciousness. It is like this: The primordial consciousness of the absolute space of phenomena is so called because all phenomena are naturally present in all-pervasive absolute space, the essential nature of which is primordially empty. Mirror-like primordial consciousness is so called because ultimate reality is self-illuminating and free of obscuring veils. The primordial consciousness of equality is so called because all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is equal in the great purity and equality of the absolute space of phenomena.

Discerning primordial consciousness is so called because unimpeded great primordial consciousness knows and perceives the inner glow. The primordial consciousness of accomplishment refers to the thorough accomplishment of self-emergent purity and freedom. These are not established as being separate. Rather, they are merely conventional names attributed to great, profound, luminous primordial consciousness that is present in the nature of the primordial ground, the sugatagarbha. They are not separate or different.

“The empty aspect of the ground absolute space is indigo, its stainless aspect is white, its majestic, sublime qualities are yellow, its freedom from contamination by faults is red, and its perfect spontaneous actualization is merely named green.

“In the nature of the ground, self-emergent great wisdom is [542] like this: Clear wisdom is so called because it illuminates all the unclear facets of primordial consciousness and sublime qualities of the domain of the ground sugatagarbha. Pervasive wisdom is so called because it pervades the totality of the ground sugatagarbha. Liberating wisdom is so called because it liberates the impure realm of saṃsāra into the pure state of buddhahood. Conquering wisdom is so called because it conquers all karma, mental afflictions, and habitual propensities in absolute space, which transcends causality. Uniting wisdom is so called because it unites saṃsāra and nirvāṇa in the absolute space of great purity and equality. Seeing the face of such great wisdom is like the rising sun in the sky. It overwhelms all obscurations, just as the sun outshines the constellations of stars, until it brings you to the state of omniscience — perfect buddhahood.

“Great wisdom is like the conflagration at the end of the eon, for it incinerates all karma, mental afflictions, and habitual propensities, as if they were aphids. Great wisdom is like a great ocean, for it gathers all sublime Dharmas, just as the ocean gathers all rivers. Great wisdom is like space, for it encompasses all sublime Dharmas, just as space encompasses the physical world and its sentient inhabitants. Great wisdom [543] is the sole eye of primordial consciousness, for just by opening it, you will truly perceive the nature of existence of ultimate reality, suchness. When a wretched person, overwhelmed by māras, sees his own face of great wisdom, in that very instant that individual becomes enlightened as the dharmakāya, Samantabhadra.”

Then Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness asked the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, Omnipresent Lord and Immutable Sovereign, what are the names for the great vision of pure primordial consciousness, the illumination by the lamp of all-pervasive primordial consciousness?”

He replied, “Son of the family, it is called by eight names, as follows: (1) The door of pure primordial consciousness is obscured by habitual propensities; it is covered in ignorance, deluding those in saṃsāra. Because it knows by opening the eye of great, all-pervasive wisdom, it is called *pristine awareness*.¹⁷⁸

(2) Because it is the great secret of all the jinas, it is *secret*, and because it is the pinnacle of all the yānas, it is called *mantra*. It is called *vajra* because pristine awareness, the sugatagarbha, is endowed with the seven vajra qualities. It is called *yāna* because it holds itself without being transformed by all the sublime qualities of pure buddhahood [544] or all the good and evil of the suffering of impure saṃsāra.¹⁷⁹ (3) It is called *reality* because it encompasses all authentic realities, and it is called *ultimate* because it is ultimate among all phenomena. Because it transcends all faults and defilements, it is called *pure*; and because it is naturally replete with all the kāyas, facets of primordial consciousness, buddhafi elds, displays, and sublime qualities of enlightenment, it is called *full*. All of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is encompassed in the ground sugatagarbha, which is uniformly pervaded and liberated by omnipresent great wisdom. So this great mind, which is unthinkable, is known as *mind*.¹⁸⁰

(4) It is called the *ground*, for it is the great, universal foundation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. It is *originally pure*, for it is primordially uncontaminated by faults and defilements. It is *perfection*, for the doors of spontaneous actualization are perfected, and it is *great*, for its perfection is unrivaled.¹⁸¹ (5) It is *spontaneously actualized*, for all the sublime qualities of the inexhaustible ornamental wheels of enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities are spontaneously actualized in it. It is called *youthful*, for it is totally free of aging, death, and deterioration; it is called *vase*, for it illuminates the depths and inner glow [of the sugatagarbha] without the periphery of spontaneous actualization ever being breached; and it is called *kāya*, for it is the perfection of all facets of primordial consciousness and sublime qualities, as if they were all compiled together.¹⁸² [545]

(6) It is called *bindu*, for it roundly encompasses all things, while transcending all the edges and corners of the intellect, mentation, and thought; and it is called *sole*, for it is none other than the essential nature of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.¹⁸³ (7) It is called *saṃsāra*, for it revolves in the impure three realms of existence, and it is called *nirvāṇa*, for it transcends that. It is called *complete*, for everything is completely subsumed in the great absolute space of the ground sugatagarbha; and it is called *consummation*, for it comprehends all phenomena.¹⁸⁴ (8) It is called *vajra*, for the dharmakāya, pristine awareness that is present in the ground, is endowed

with the seven vajra qualities; and it is called *essence*, for it is the essence of all phenomena.¹⁸⁵

“These eight synonyms do not have different referents, and apart from the mere names, the basis of these expressions transcends all conceptual elaboration.

“The withdrawal of the inner glow of all the sublime qualities of the ground is like uniformly pervasive space. A symbol for this is the covering of darkness, even though space does not become bright or dark; and a symbol for great wisdom illuminating this nature is the rising sun.

“O son of the family, there are three aspects to following the path. They are as follows: the *nirmāṇakāya*, which is spacious consciousness whereby thoughts are released in their own place, [546] and which takes compassion as the path; the *saṃbhogakāya*, which takes the radiance of spontaneous actualization as the path, and which thereby takes the manifest nature as the path; and the *dharmakāya* of the great expanse, which is primordial resting, entailing the unmodified, great settling in the essential nature, and which takes the essential nature as the path. Whichever of these three you take as the path, by practicing with keen, unflagging enthusiasm, you will ultimately be liberated in the nature of all three. This is a sublimely important point.

“O son of the family, primordial consciousness is the faculty that illuminates the obscurity of the ground, the great expanse that is beyond all articulation. Beginners recognize consciousness that is immensely vast and inexpressible, which is not the conditioned consciousness that rises and passes and conceptually roves about in the realm of appearances. If they take it as the path and rest in its nature, this is the radiance of great wisdom, and it naturally dispels all the defilements of ignorance. With the manifestation of the great wisdom of the inner glow, and with the emergence of the expanse of the space treasury of ultimate reality, it is certain that they will completely perfect all the sublime qualities of the Great Perfection — pristine awareness that transcends causality, free of all extremes — in the nondual nature of absolute space and primordial consciousness.

“This king of pristine awareness, free of extremes, [547] is ever so profound, potent, swift to realize, and unsurpassed. It arises as the good fortune of people with superior faculties, so it is very subtle and difficult to behold. Now that the teachings of the profound, supreme, unsurpassed fruitional *yāna* have degenerated, I am revealing this quintessential pith instruction — which determines the ground, investigates the bifurcation into the apprehender and the apprehended, holds the key to differentiating the two truths, and distinguishes

between the mind and pristine awareness — for the sake of blind people who regard cause and effect as the definitive truth and who proudly mistake understanding for realization. Servants of Māra — with their perverse aspirations, a hundred million miles away from this teaching, who revile it, impose their false projections on it, or treat it as something laughable — have no karmic connection with me, so they are far removed. On the other hand, fortunate ones who are my heart-essence disciples: Take note of this point and put it into practice!

“O son of the family, all sentient beings are never separated, even for an instant, from the primordial great perfection of the sublime qualities of the ground. Nevertheless, just as water that is fluid by nature freezes and becomes hard, so do sentient beings cling to the three realms of saṃsāra and become deluded, without the ground ever deviating into benefit or harm. [548] Here is the way in which pristine awareness is superior to the ground: The ground is like holding a wish-fulfilling jewel in your hand; however, because you don’t recognize it, you mistake it for dirt or a rock, fail to treat it with respect, and therefore achieve no siddhis. Pristine awareness is like recognizing the wish-fulfilling jewel and, by treating it with respect, acquiring everything you need and want. The ground is like a colorless sky obscured by darkness, while pristine awareness is like dawn breaking and the sun rising. The ground is like the ownerless retinue, treasures, and self-emergent bounties of a great king, while pristine awareness is like the owner who enjoys all these things. The ground is like being tormented by the suffering of an illness while a healing balm lies hidden beneath your bed, whereas pristine awareness is like recognizing the balm as medicine, applying it, being relieved from the misery caused by the illness, and living happily.

“O son of the family, I have never been separated from you, not even for an instant, since time immemorial, but it is only now that you behold my face. Now, do not depart from this indivisible nature. If you depart from me, like before, you will not meet with me again for incalculable eons.” [549]

Phase 5: Determining Secret Dualistic Grasping and Revealing the Way of Natural Liberation

Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness proclaimed, “Bhagavān, Omnipresent Lord and Immutable Sovereign, I have been obscured by ignorance, my eyes

closed from sight. For eons until now, I have collapsed in the bed of the darkness of ignorance, encased within the shell of sporadically arising patterns of habitual propensities. Without perceiving your face, I have been ensnared by dualistic grasping. Now I have awakened from this bed. By the power of luminous rays of primordial consciousness, I am freed from the shell of habitual propensities, and I behold the face of the Teacher. Now seeing with the eyes of wisdom and laughing with mirth, I call out:

“Thinking that this ground absolute space, which is free of elaboration, comes and goes — ha ha!

Thinking that this ground, which has no object, is benefited or harmed by cause and effect — ha ha!

Seeking accomplishment elsewhere, while the primordial ground is present as buddhahood — ha ha!

Revolving about in saṃsāra, while I have always been free of transition and change — ha ha!

Although saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are none other than my own appearances, perceiving them as apparitions of the apprehender and the apprehended — ha ha!

“When seeing nonobjectivity as great openness, objective buddhas fall over a precipice — ha ha! [550]

When seeing the apprehender and apprehended as identityless, the wheel of saṃsāra is carried away by the wind — ha ha!

When the great confidence is found within myself regarding the ground absolute space, the storehouse of accumulated virtues and vices is left behind with no owner — ha ha!

“When arriving at the pinnacle of the king of yānas, some exhaust themselves with degenerate and inferior yānas — ha ha!

Not seeing effortless, self-emergent pleasure and turning their backs on it, some are tormented for eons by the suffering of great hunger and thirst — ha ha!

Having fallen from an independent, prosperous kingdom, some still shoulder a great burden of unbearable, intense misery — ha ha!

“Complete and instantaneous vanishing of dense habitual propensities from beginningless lifetimes — ha ha!

Immediate dissolving, without meditation, of the grasp of many eons of

immediate dissolving, without meditation, of the snare of many eons of
tenacious dualistic grasping — ha ha!

Achieving the eternal state of the dharmakāya, without even a moment's striving
or exertion — ha ha!

All the vast and numerous physical worlds and their sentient inhabitants
appearing like this, without performing even the slightest bit of virtue,
achieving buddhahood together with me — ha ha!"

Vajra of Pristine Awareness asked, "Bhagavān, how do sentient beings become
deluded? [551] May the Omnipresent Lord and Immutable Sovereign please
explain!"

The Bhagavān replied, "Son of the family, here is how sentient beings
become deluded. As analogies, great wisdom is like the eye that reveals the face
of the dharmakāya, and the obscuration by ignorance is like closing that eye so
that phenomena disappear. This is adventitious, not in the nature of the ground
or of wisdom. The reification of reality is causal ignorance. The confluence of
various transient habitual propensities with this cause is confluent ignorance.
The thorough establishment of saṃsāra resulting simply from the temporal
confluence of these factors is instantaneous ignorance. The obscuration of the
ground by ignorance is the substrate, which acts as the basis for all phenomena
in saṃsāra. Ignorance of the ground is the obscuring karmic substrate. The
assembly of habitual propensities is the substrate of manifold habitual
propensities. The dualistic reification of the apprehender and the apprehended is
called the substrate that gathers in configurations.¹⁸⁶

"At first this acts simply as the cause, then it becomes reified and stable, and
finally all the characteristics of the ground withdraw into the inner glow of its
depths, [552] like the light of a crystal withdrawing into itself. The inner glow
shifts to an outer radiance, encompassing the characteristics of saṃsāra, like the
luminosity of sunlight even when the sun is veiled by clouds.

"There are three types of substrate: the actual substrate, the temporarily
luminous substrate, and the substrate that gathers in configurations. Among
them, the actual substrate is a mindless vacuity, like the sky at dusk, covered
over by darkness. The temporarily luminous substrate makes it possible for
thoughts to appear, just as a polished mirror reflects a face. Luminosity
manifests in this vacuity like the initial breaking of dawn in the sky. A very
subtle, isolated consciousness that grasps at the 'I' arises from this. As it
becomes somewhat reified and fortified, the self is established. The appearance

of things separate from the self involves the establishment of the outer appearances of the physical world, the inner movements of its sentient inhabitants, and the intervening appearances of the five sensory objects. These are slightly reified by afflictive mentation, resulting in the emergence of an expanded consciousness that enters into its objects, and this constitutes conditioned consciousness of them. The self serves as a basis, like a house, and the six kinds of activating conditioned consciousness arise from that consciousness. Once they have entered the five sense faculties, apprehended objects emerge from this coarse state and are permeated by subtle grasping. [553]

“Here is how they are composed in saṃsāra: Forms appear to the visual faculty, conditioned consciousness fully apprehends them, and they are called *apprehended objects*. The grasping of subtle mental consciousness permeates and closely holds them, and this is called the *apprehending mind*. Smells appear to the olfactory faculty, olfactory conditioned consciousness fully apprehends them, and they are called *apprehended objects*. Their individual differentiation by subtle mental consciousness is called *grasping*. Tastes appear to the gustatory faculty, conditioned consciousness fully apprehends them, and they are called *apprehended objects*. Subtle mental consciousness examines, permeates, and closely holds them, and this is called *grasping*. Tactile sensations likewise appear to the tactile faculty, tactile conditioned consciousness fully apprehends them, and they are called *apprehended objects*. Conditioned mental consciousness arises as subtle conceptualizations; it attributes names, differentiates their referents, and reifies them, and this is called the *apprehending mind*.

“The coarse separation of the apprehender and the apprehended is like this: The sense of ‘mine’ emerges from the self-grasping of afflictive mentation, [554] and these [objects grasped as ‘mine’ and self-grasping thoughts] are called *apprehended objects* and *prior thoughts*. The six kinds of conditioned consciousness are called the *apprehending mind* and *subsequent thoughts*. At the subtle level, it is the custom of this yāna to identify conditioned consciousness as the apprehended object and subtle mental consciousness as the apprehending mind. At the coarse level, objects and the thoughts that grasp at objects as a whole come first. Then, at the subtle level, subsequent thoughts examine the nature of objects and differentiate among them. This is the sequence in which delusive appearances and mindsets are generated.

“To reverse this sequence, when coarse appearances are made dormant, it is

called the *substrate that gathers in configurations*. Here is how this arises: The appearance of the self is apprehended by mentation, the faculties are created by afflictive mentation, conditioned consciousness is created by mentation, mental consciousness creates close holding, and then all joys, sorrows, and neutral feelings are closely held — and this is delusion.

“O son of the family, the substrate is the formless realm, conditioned consciousness is the form realm, and subtle mental consciousness self-emerges as the desire realm. The five vital energies of impure saṃsāra are like this: Obscuring vital energy veils the eye of wisdom. [555] Assembling vital energy brings together the defilements of habitual propensities. Differentiating vital energy separates the mind and appearances. Vacillating vital energy causes all kinds of appearances to manifest. Transforming vital energy brings about transitions.

“There are five obscurations that veil the inner glow of primordial consciousness: The ignorance of the substrate veils the dharmakāya. The obscuration of afflictive mentation veils the inner glow of spontaneous actualization. The obscuration of mentation veils wisdom. The obscuration of conditioned consciousness veils primordial consciousness. The obscuration of dualistic grasping veils the authentic path.

“Due to the veiling effects of these obscurations, the five radiances that obscure primordial consciousness are as follows: They appear as the indigo radiance of the [primordial consciousness of the] absolute space of phenomena, the white radiance of mirror-like primordial consciousness, the yellow radiance of the primordial consciousness of equality, the red radiance of discerning primordial consciousness, and the green radiance of the primordial consciousness of accomplishment. The creative expression of the first is delusion, of the second is hatred, of the third is pride, of the fourth is attachment, and of the fifth is envy.

“The aggregate of form obscures the buddha family, [556] and its radiance appears as immaterial space. The aggregate of conditioned consciousness obscures the vajra family, and its radiance appears as water. The aggregate of feelings obscures the jewel family, and its radiance appears as earth. The aggregate of recognition obscures the lotus family, and its radiance appears as fire. The aggregate of compositional factors obscures the karma family, and its radiance appears as air. The appearances of these radiances are mindless. If you think they do have minds, when there is a transition [from one life to the next], would the appearing mind become nothing after death? Furthermore,

adventitious appearances that arise unpredictably are also mindless. If you think they do have minds, this would mistakenly imply the extreme of cessation involved in birth and death. The appearances to the mind are not actually the mind. If you think they are, the fact that the appearances that follow the mind are not constantly present implies that ultimately, they are simply appearances to the mind. Thus, the withdrawal of all appearances and mindsets into the substrate is called the *substrate that gathers in configurations*.

“O son of the family, delusion in the abodes of the three realms of saṃsāra from beginningless lifetimes does not entail the slightest movement from this place to another one, [557] and when time passes, there is not even an instant of change. Therefore, son of the family, you are without birth, cessation, or transmigration. Rest in this nature, and you will become enlightened in the absolute space that is indefinable.”

Then all the assembled disciples, including Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness, uttered this prayer in verse, with one voice and one mind:

In order to encounter our own face of Samantabhadra, the original buddha,
we bow to all the buddhas of the three times,
nondual from great absolute space,
the primordially free space of pristine awareness,
which is unmodified in great ultimate reality.
We vow never to be separated from you from now on.
By bearing equality in mind, we are liberated in absolute space.

Ho! The power of wisdom and primordial consciousness soaring
in the vast space of the great expanse of the intent
of the buddhas as the sugatagarbha
is witness to the purity of our prayer.

May we truly realize
the dharmakāya, the original ground, absolute space,
as the buddha prior to all buddhas.
Unmodified by excellent qualities,
unchanged [558] by faults and defilements,
great absolute space is free of the extremes of conceptual elaboration!

May we truly realize
the great inner depths, devoid of gain and loss,
the expanse that is free of signs and words,
uniformly pervasive and empty of all partiality and extremes.

May we truly realize
the dharmakāya as the equality and purity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa,
the saṃbhogakāya as the display of spontaneous actualization,
and the nirmāṇakāya as the perfection of natural liberation.

May we truly realize
the nonexistence of buddhas and sentient beings,
with no causes, no contributing conditions, no effects,
no path, and no primordial consciousness to be achieved.

May we truly realize
the primordial purification of faults and defilements,
expansive primordial consciousness that knows the depths [of the ground] and
perceives its luminosity, and
absolute space, which is free of the three times, a beginning, and an end.

In that way, without seeking,
may we purify the stains that veil the face
of the perfect dharmakāya, and upon purifying our environment in great
nonobjectivity,
may we enter the authentic path.

May we be free of veils of ignorance that conceal
unborn, nonarising great wisdom,

and may we truly realize
the great nature of existence of suchness.

By the powerful blessings of great wisdom,
may we be freed from the obstacles of pitfalls and errors,
and without striving, [559] may we enter
the authentic path, our original nature.

Without modification, transformation, training, or progress,
may we truly see, with the primordial consciousness
that perceives the full range of phenomena,
the authentic, supreme path,
and may we cross over to original absolute space.

Authentic reality is not seen by looking;

you encounter your own face
by resting without looking.
May we enter the authentic path,
the profound, essential point of the view without a viewpoint.

The dharmakāya is not achieved through meditation;
we are liberated as the dharmakāya by resting without meditating.
May we enter the authentic path,
the profound, essential point of meditation without meditating.

There is no achievement with conduct, only with inactivity;
the great task is achieved naturally, with no conduct.
May we enter the authentic path,

the profound, essential point of the great conduct with no activity.
By cleansing the eye of great wisdom and primordial consciousness
of the dust of murky stains,
may we directly see ultimate reality,
and swiftly achieve the state of a matured vidyādhara.

Having progressed in meditative experiences
of pure perception, free of all grasping
at phenomena, which are like the ten analogies of illusion,

may we achieve the state of a vidyādhara with mastery over the life force.
By manifestly achieving the autonomy of natural liberation,
without reliance on causes or contributing conditions, [560]
may pristine awareness reach its consummation in the ground,

and may we swiftly achieve the state of a mahāmudrā vidyādhara.

May dualistic phenomena
be extinguished in great, intellect-transcending ultimate reality,
and by seizing the fortress of acquiring confidence,

may we achieve the state of a spontaneously actualized vidyādhara.
May all mental appearances of the three realms of saṃsāra
be dissolved in original, great absolute space,
like a dream dissolving into the space of awareness,
and may we achieve enlightenment as the youthful vase kāya.

Phase 6: Teachings on the Essential Points of Practice and Their Key Distinctions

Then Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness asked the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, Omnipresent Lord and Immutable Sovereign, please listen. Now are there, or are there not, ways for practitioners of this profound, secret, unsurpassed yāna to go astray? May the Bhagavān please explain!”

He replied, “Son of the family, apart from individuals who combine wisdom and enthusiasm, among blind, ordinary beings, some find assurance in empty talk, without fathoming the inner depths. Some are caught up in quarreling involving attachment and hostility, while praising themselves and disparaging others. Others waste their lives by becoming fixated on words, while some beginners [561] find assurance in objectifying the path, view, and meditation and grasping at the supremacy of their own opinions. Some claim to have excellent qualities, although they have none, and out of fear that their own status may diminish, they delude themselves while refusing to engage in conversation with others. Some travel from one place to another teaching Dharma to increase their own status, and yet they have more craving than dogs and beggars. Others claim the ability to heal, to protect, and to rescue others from death, while prizing their attractive qualities that impress people. There are those who, while under the guardianship of malevolent gods and demons, proclaim their meditative experiences and delusive dream experiences to others and then wander about everywhere in the cities and countryside, never finding satisfaction. Then, while reifying teachings on good and evil, they waste their lives performing magic rituals to dispel obstacles. Such people delude themselves in the process of

trying to delude others. They are just like desiccated insects caught in the slime they produce to trap others.

“In contrast to such people, my disciples, who are fortunate enough to be suitable vessels for the secret, unsurpassed, profound practical instructions, are like this: They have unshakable faith in their vajra guru and admiration and reverence for the meaning of the Mahāyāna. [562] Recognizing the pointlessness of saṃsāra, they have little grasping or craving. Because they are mindfully aware that composite phenomena are impermanent, they have stable temperaments. They are drawn to remote mountain passes where there are no people, and they know their own capabilities. Such people, with the combined qualities of sharp wisdom, quick awareness, stable dispositions, single-pointed wisdom, and unwavering commitment, are my emanations, nondual from me, and they will all be liberated in one life and with one body. This is a general presentation of the specific characteristics of suitable vessels. In short, individuals who are suitable vessels are indifferent to the concerns of this life, while constantly applying themselves diligently to the concerns of future lives, so they are expelled from human society.

“Son of the family, listen well! I shall give you profound practical instructions to distinguish between different subjects, so bear them in mind! If you do not know how to distinguish between the substrate and the dharmakāya, you may take the substrate as your path, and due to exhausting yourself in that state, you may mistakenly create the causes for rebirth in the peak of mundane existence. Here is how to distinguish between them. There are two kinds of substrate: the actual substrate and the temporarily luminous substrate. The first obscures the face of the ground with ignorance, mixing ignorance with the ground. This is like a cloudless sky being covered with darkness at dusk. At that time, the sky does not turn into darkness and darkness does not turn into the sky. Just as the sky does not vanish when the assembled causes and contributing conditions [563] are dispersed, ignorance does not transform into the ground, and the ground does not transform into ignorance. Nevertheless, with the confluence of causes and contributing conditions, the substrate acts as the basis for all of saṃsāra and is therefore called the *substrate*. This is not a gloom-like covering of darkness, but it is likened to darkness because it obscures your own face. In reality, it abides as a blank, immaterial vacuity in which there are no thoughts of anything. There are four ways of grasping at this: as space-like, as nothingness, as neither existence nor nonexistence, and as boundless conditioned consciousness.¹⁸⁷ Subtle grasping of your own consciousness weaves them

into the substrate, and when this stabilizes, you are led astray in these four ways and get stuck in them. Those who remain in a blank, unthinking vacuity create the causes for [rebirth in a state that is] devoid of discernment.

“Second, regarding the temporarily luminous substrate, by lucidly resting in and meditating on that vacuity, thus impeding all roving thought patterns, a clear vacuity arises. By regarding this as the best of meditations and cultivating it, you will be propelled to the peak of mundane existence, but you will not transcend saṃsāra. Both of those are powerful, virtuous states of mind, [564] unrivaled by other defiled virtues, but since they fail to transcend saṃsāra, they hold you back. By recognizing this, you come to the firm conclusion that they are not the path.

“The dharmakāya is not an immaterial blankness, but by settling in your own unmodified nature, you are self-liberated. It is self-illuminated by great wisdom, the creative power of its radiance is unimpeded, and without entering into objects, it is called the *causal dharmakāya*. Being unmodified, by way of its own natural limpidity as self-emergent absolute space, devoid of a center and periphery, it is infinitely pervasive as great nonduality, profound and luminous — great primordial consciousness that knows [reality as it is] and perceives [the full range of phenomena]. This manifestation of all the characteristics of enlightenment is called the *fruition dharmakāya*. Regarding the former [causal dharmakāya], consciousness takes this essential nature as the path, and regarding the latter [fruition dharmakāya], there is self-awakening in the indivisibility of both, and this limitlessly pervades reality.¹⁸⁸

“O son of the family, here is how to distinguish between mentation and wisdom: Mentation emerges due to the substrate’s obscuration of the radiance and creative power of wisdom, and it is the grasping that is the basis for misapprehending the self-knowing existence of all appearances and mindsets. There are two types of wisdom: manifest wisdom and [565] path wisdom. The former truly knows and actualizes the nature of existence of ultimate reality, or suchness. The latter rests consciousness in its own nature, wide-open and naked, and indefinable, without being modified by the intellect, mentation, or concepts. Thus, its essential nature is empty, its manifest nature is luminous, and its compassion is naturally liberated and unimpeded, without entering into objects. By familiarizing yourself with this, you know words and their meanings flowing forth in the expanse, and without reliance on training, you have a limitless ability to compose commentaries and melodic verses. This is a creative expression of such wisdom. However, if you feel proud and cling to this ability, your wisdom

will decline and you will stray from the path. This is like being on the verge of acquiring great wealth but then losing it to a thief. When inconceivable sublime qualities flow forth from the expanse, make sure you do not succumb to pitfalls and errors! Mentation is the basis of the mind, and because it is modified and caught up in the experiences of rejecting and accepting, it is important not to take it as the path. Wisdom entails not doing anything. Recognize this as the authentic path!¹⁸⁹

“O son of the family, here is how to distinguish between conditioned consciousness and primordial consciousness: Conditioned [566] consciousness veils the eye of wisdom. It has the nature of investigating and analyzing the configurations that emerge from the substrate, which then become fragmented, arising and passing and being configured as saṃsāra. It is the creative expression of the radiance of primordial consciousness, but it is not actual primordial consciousness itself.

“Primordial consciousness has always been self-arising. Once the defilements of ignorance have been cleansed in absolute space and conditioned consciousness has been purified in the ground, all sublime qualities of buddhahood, as well as those of the specific grounds and paths, are magnificently self-emergent and self-arising, unlike the intellect, mentation, and concepts, which are bound in time, arising, passing, and changing. This is also called *primordial consciousness that perceives the full range of phenomena*. The path primordial consciousness is just the unimpeded arising of all manner of phenomena when the obscuring veils of the substrate are removed. In short, the appearances and creative expressions of the radiance [of primordial consciousness] when the inner glow of primordial consciousness subsides constitute conditioned consciousness.

“O son of the family, here is how to distinguish between the mind and pristine awareness: Mind is the essential nature of saṃsāra, its cause is ignorance, its illusory apparitions are appearances, its creative expressions are thoughts, and its displays are relative truths. In short, it emerges from the substrate, and all great, middling, and small virtuous and nonvirtuous deeds, [567] together with their defilements — so long as the uniform pervasion of the essential nature and wisdom is not actualized — do nothing but perpetuate saṃsāra. The virtues of the mind entail merely hoping for results by accomplishing their causes. But as for achieving buddhahood, this is like wanting to build a ladder from rabbits’ horns, or like wanting the son of a barren woman to own a house. Once you have come under the domination of the

substrate, everything that is not united with the power of wisdom is the mind.

“There are two kinds of mind: the deluded mind and the mind that seeks the path. The first refers to the minds of all sentient beings who cycle about in delusion. The second refers to the minds of all those who wish to enter the authentic path and who take the mind as their path. As for its cause, since it is generated by the ground of saṃsāra, its results are also confined solely to saṃsāra, so it is a relative truth.

“Pristine awareness is mastered with great wisdom. At this time, its ground is the dharmakāya, its radiance is wisdom, and its creative expressions are none other than the displays of primordial consciousness. Since the three kāyas are generated by the spontaneously actualized ground, all views and meditations become the fruition of omniscience alone, and they are authentic.

“There are two types of pristine awareness: causal pristine awareness and [568] fruitional pristine awareness. [The former] is mastered by great wisdom, which naturally settles and dissolves without modification into the essential nature of reality, which is all-pervasive and devoid of a center and periphery. Its radiance consists of unimpeded creative displays that are uninfluenced by objective conditions and unmixed with objects. Although beginners may identify it, they oscillate between achieving stillness and then falling back into delusion due to forgetfulness. Their abiding in these alternating states indicates the subliminal presence of subtle grasping with effortful intellect and mentation. This shows that they have merely entered the path; however, because they have not achieved stability and are inconsistent, it is the stage of having merely recognized the path.

“By the power of increasing familiarization, during the waking state they are released into the infinite expanse of the nature of existence, without oscillating between stillness and delusion.

“In the dream state, in contrast, sometimes such people are under the influence of stillness, while at other times they become lost in delusion. This is the phase when they have just reached the path, so this is pristine awareness of reaching the path.

“Due to increasing familiarization with this phase, pristine awareness never loses its own power at any time during the dream state or the waking state, and this is expansive pristine awareness. When at all times and in all situations there are no digressions from the great clear light of [569] pristine awareness — like the absence of darkness once the sun has risen — pristine awareness has manifested, whereby all subtle and coarse modes of apprehension of the view

and meditation dissolve right where they are, and no defilements of the mind arise. This is pristine awareness in which confidence is acquired.

“The fact that the sublime qualities of the domain of the sugatagarbha have still not manifested is a sign that you have not yet transcended the obscurations of the substrate, so this is causal pristine awareness. It is analogous to the break of dawn before the sun has risen. By practicing with enormous, unflagging enthusiasm, causal pristine awareness is awakened in the absolute space of the great fruition. Entering the womb of the dharmakāya, which is devoid of signs, it limitlessly manifests as displays of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness. This is fruitional pristine awareness. I say that the period when dawn has broken, after the darkness of the night has been dispelled but the sun has not yet shown its face, is analogous to causal pristine awareness; and the period when the sun rises and the light of dawn shines forth is like potent fruitional pristine awareness.

“If you think that the first occasion is not the cause but the fruition, even though you have identified pristine awareness, you have still not transcended saṃsāra by even a hair’s breadth. [570] Those who proclaim this fruitional yāna do not mistakenly expect the fruition of buddhahood by practicing the virtues of the body, speech, and mind as its causes. Rather, ultimate reality is taken as the path, and by cultivating this, you are liberated right where you are. Hence, since no fruition is acquired, this is said to be the fruitional yāna.¹⁹⁰

“O son of the family, here is how to distinguish between understanding and realization: Those who have not fathomed the depths pretentiously mistake understanding for realization and then become bewildered by delusional saṃsāra. The nature of all external appearances is determined by the analytical intellect and mentation; and after you decisively recognize them as unreal and empty, you again reflect, ‘All things that appear are empty,’ and repeatedly analyze them as empty. This is called *analytical understanding of emptiness*.

“The nature of all appearances and mindsets is determined by the intellect and mentation and is ascertained solely as the mind, and then you become absorbed in grasping at emptiness. All of this is called *understanding that apprehends emptiness as empty*. Some people determine the nature of all appearing phenomena and then go astray by irresponsibly thinking, ‘I have directly realized emptiness, so cause and effect do not exist — even as relative [truths].’ This is called *irresponsible understanding of emptiness*. Others determine the nature of all appearances and mindsets and ascertain them as empty and nonobjective, [571] and then say that there is no difference between

meditating and not meditating on their empty nature. Making this enormous mistake is called *false understanding of emptiness*. There are some who determine the nature of all appearances and mindsets and ascertain them to be empty and nonobjective. Then they understand only nominally all the sublime qualities of the domain of the ground sugatagarbha but think, ‘This is my view. Without needing the view, meditation, or conduct, these are my excellent qualities!’ If they become confused and irresponsible and do not practice, thinking that good qualities do them no good or harm, their understanding becomes like a drawing of a lamp — this is called *meaningless understanding*.

“Having distinguished between the mind and pristine awareness and having merely identified pristine awareness, some think, ‘I have definitely realized it!’ and they delude themselves by falling under the influence of the eight mundane concerns. This is called *deluded understanding*. Without considering that their mental continuum has not shown any improvement, some think, ‘I have mastered the fruition of liberation!’ and they conceitedly believe they have reached a lofty state. This is *mistaken understanding*. Some regard as ultimate the yāna that partially fabricates the relative forms and signs denoting primordial consciousness and sublime qualities of the domain of the ground sugatagarbha. Identifying this and having confidence in it is called [572] *understanding that confuses the ultimate with the relative*.

“Realization is like this: Once you have determined the nature of all external appearances as unreal — and after you deeply ascertain that identitylessness is like a hallucination, the lack of true existence is like a dream, and nonobjectivity is like the outer limits of space — you naturally, without contrivance, dwell at all times and on all occasions without grasping at true existence. This is the first phase, in which understanding has merely settled in your mindstream. Then, having ascertained the configurations of all subjective and objective phenomena as being not other than yourself and as the two kinds of [coarse and subtle] thoughts, you see all appearances and mindsets as truly being of one taste in their essential nature.¹⁹¹ This occurs when all dualistic phenomena insubstantially arise like mirages, without grasping at them, as if they were hallucinations. This is the phase of appearances arising as illusions. In short, at all times and in all circumstances, not letting pristine awareness slip away from its own domain into the mind is the realization of the immutable essence. Without modifying any phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa with the intellect, mentation, or concepts, grasping at them dissolves, just as there is no reification of dreams when they have been recognized as dreams. Like an illusion and its

basis, without mistakenly looking outside, [573] awareness limitlessly expands as consummate displays in the expanse of the absolute space of phenomena.¹⁹²

This synthesizes an extremely profound point. Without falling into such errors as grasping inwardly, above, or below, correctly know the way of nonduality, which transcends signs, objects, and thoughts.

“O son of the family, know that this is how to distinguish between liberation and delusion. By the power of determining the meaning of identitylessness and familiarizing yourself with it, you ascertain the interwoven threads of appearances and mindsets, and without entering saṃsāra, you are liberated in dependence upon the path. Having identified the path pristine awareness, by the power of practicing with great enthusiasm and courage, the vast treasure of the space of ultimate reality naturally comes forth, and you correctly see the nature of the two truths. This is the yoga of seeing truth. At this time, by practicing uninterruptedly, finally you directly cut the cord of dualistic grasping, and appearing objects cease. By dissolving from your heart the oppressive weight of self-grasping, the mind of grasping ceases. Once the dust of ignorance has been cleansed in the ground of being, the eye of primordial consciousness is attained, and this is ascertained as liberation. At this time, by expanding without limits [574] in the great, intellect-transcending extinction into ultimate reality, you do not enter into any of the activities of saṃsāra.

“For suitable vessels of the profound secret mantra, who possess the karmic momentum of merit and prayers, the chariot of enthusiasm, and the sharp eye of wisdom, here is how dreams arise at three levels: Superior individuals, who purify dreams in the clear light and merge their surroundings with that, become enlightened as the dharmakāya. Middling individuals recognize dreams for what they are, and when they are able to emanate and transform them, they find the relief [of liberation] as saṃbhogakāyas.¹⁹³ Inferior individuals cut the flow of dreams containing habituation to bad propensities, and when they have only good dreams, they definitely find the relief [of liberation] as nirmāṇakāyas. Moreover, know that the measure of conduct is that they do not enter into activities of the eight mundane concerns, but release activity.

“Deluded sentient beings are of three types: continually deluded, deluded regarding errors, and deluded regarding the path. The first type refers to people who are deluded in the continuum of the three realms of saṃsāra, and who for beginningless eons have not seen the entrance to the path. The second type refers to those who are intoxicated by pleasant experiences and deluded by attachment. When their mindstreams are caught up in harsh experiences, they become

delirious. [575] When their mindstreams are caught up in experiences of luminosity, they idealize various visions of gods, demons, and dreams, becoming deluded regarding the objects of those appearances.

“The third type refers to those who, in order to reach the authentic grounds and paths, determine the nature of all appearances and single-pointedly settle on them as being empty, but who become deluded by grasping at the path as being empty. Moreover, in determining the nature of outer appearances and decisively recognizing them to be totally nonexistent, they mistakenly treat virtues and vices as being empty. In this way their realization is false, like medicine becoming poison. Furthermore, they determine the nature of outer appearances and settle on them as empty, they determine the nature of the inner body and mind and settle on them as empty of a self, and finally they rest in indifference. In so doing, they foolishly regard emptiness as being devoid of benefit or harm.

“By determining the nature of the outer physical world, the inner mind, and all intervening sensory impressions, and accurately knowing their causal characteristics, they naturally settle in a state of not grasping at them. Rejecting the way of practice that never dismisses the significance of cause and effect until they are liberated, they mistake understanding for realization and say, ‘Everything is empty. This is the absolute space of phenomena. There is no cause and effect. Buddhas and sentient beings do not exist. Whatever one does is meditation.’ While irresponsibly doing whatever they want, [576] they proclaim their superiority. The mindstreams of such people do not rise above saṃsāra, and their wisdom eyes are blinded by intellectual analysis. Alas, they rise from the depths of the terrifying, powerful, great hells, in which they are powerless, and then fall back down.

“Well, if simply knowing the circumstances in which the great, oppressive weight of delusion is absent does not make it vanish, and if that knowledge doesn’t bring liberation and has no benefit, why, you might ask, should you determine the nature of such delusion? The advantage of doing so is that if you practice with keen enthusiasm, you will have great knowledge regarding the authentic path, up to the point when you reach the stage of extinction into ultimate reality. Moreover, its nature should be determined because there is a difference between the swift and slow paths, like the movement of the sun and moon compared to the movement of a chariot. If you think it is enough merely to know how cause and effect do not exist and then to rest in that state, you have become a servant of a master who exalts all the special, profound teachings of Māra. Uh-oh!

“My teachings are not like that. Here you ascertain the way of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as the tenet system of the nature of existence, the Great Perfection, and then you ride the chariot of keen enthusiasm, without straying from that state. [577] It is my promise that you will cross the ocean of mundane existence and peace by the power of pristine awareness, and not by relying on cause and effect. When you purify all relative states as being nonobjective, you will actualize Buddha Samantabhadra. A la la! Where are saṃsāra and delusion? See whether or not you have severed the root of dualistic grasping at all your appearances and mindsets and have definitely achieved the state of Samantabhadra. Realize it! If you have confidence by practicing just a little, without realizing this, you will remain in the nexus of cause and effect. Alas! So overcome this fault.

“When you hope to take as the path the pristine awareness that is present in the ground dharmakāya, that is when the buddhas place their hopes in sentient beings. Ha ha! If you analytically determine the nature of all phenomena as empty, conceitedly think you have realized this, and think that cause and effect do not exist, consider: Don’t you have form? If you have form, the agent that takes on form is the basis for cause and effect, and form is established as the effect. So know this!

“Likewise, don’t you have sound, smell, taste, tactile sensations, and mental objects? If you do, the agent that takes these on is the basis of cause and effect, and [578] these objects are ascertained as causes and effects. Ha ha! You fortunate individuals with karmic momentum like mine should carefully investigate your own mindstreams and become experts in distinguishing between liberation and delusion. Until you have manifestly become a buddha, without even a vestige of the names of the three realms of saṃsāra, bear in mind the especially profound point and supreme teaching of not falling under the influence of irresponsibility. Treasure this!

“Son of the family, if you do not know how to distinguish between buddhas and sentient beings, by regarding buddhas as sentient beings you will stray toward false realizations. Here is how to distinguish between them: Buddhas are omnipresent and free of transition and change. They do not fall to any bias. They transcend all extremes. They expand without limits as displays of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness. They transcend objects. They are not established as teachers and disciples. They transcend the body. They do not fall to the extremes of self and other. They manifest the inner glow of uniformly pervasive wisdom in the great bliss of the absolute space of phenomena. Know

that they do not fall to the extreme of signs.

“O son of the family, do not think that buddhas have form. If you thought they did, [579] would you not regard them as sentient beings composed by the form aggregate? Do not think that buddhas have conditioned consciousness. If you thought they did, would you not regard them as sentient beings composed by the aggregate of conditioned consciousness? Do not think that buddhas have feelings. If you thought they did, would you not regard them as sentient beings composed by the aggregate of feelings? Do not think that buddhas have recognition. If you thought they did, would you not regard them as sentient beings composed by the aggregate of recognition? Do not think that buddhas have compositional factors. If you thought they did, would you not regard them as sentient beings composed by the aggregate of compositional factors? Do not think that buddhas have teachers and disciples. If you thought they did, would you not regard them as sentient beings subject to dualistic grasping? Do not think that buddhas arose in the past. If you thought they did, [580] would you not regard them as sentient beings who are under the influence of birth and death? Do not think that buddhas will arise in the future. If you thought they would, would you not regard them as sentient beings who have fallen to the partiality of acquiring things? Do not think that buddhas exist in the present. If you thought they did, would you not regard them as stable, immutable sentient beings?

“From the substrate arises grasping at the ‘I,’ which gives rise to the appearances of afflictive mentation, which leads to the emergence of mentation, which leads to the emergence of the sensory faculties, which leads to the emergence of conditioned consciousness, which leads to the emergence of closely held thoughts. The assembly of these can only mean that you are a sentient being. Due to transitions in these configurations, the three times arise. If you think there is a buddha with such characteristics, this is the great misconception of regarding buddhas as sentient beings. Nevertheless, if you think the facets of primordial consciousness and sublime qualities are present in the mindstream of a buddha, since the mindstreams of all sentient beings of the three realms do not lie outside the expanse of Samantabhadra, there would be no difference between buddhas and sentient beings, so there would be no one but buddhas. A la la!

“On the other hand, [581] if you think that buddhas live in realms that are pleasant and gentle, with beautifully constructed dwellings, fine companions, and glorious sensual enjoyments, they would not be superior to gods of the form

realm — it would obviously suffice for them to be born in the form realm. Know that the teacher, who is an appearance of the disciples themselves, reveals to them the path of self-liberation, and all the masters, writings, and so on are spontaneous appearances — none are autonomous entities that have always existed. If you say and think that all buddhas, sentient beings, and sensory impressions do not exist from their own side, but external objects do so exist, that is incorrect. All sentient beings know that, except for parasites, there is no one within them apart from themselves, but they still become deluded by clinging to the reality of appearing objects and reifying them.

“For example, even in a dream, when appearing objects arise and you come and go, you must think that sentient beings and appearing objects continue to exist after you have gone. When you travel from one realm to another, you must certainly regard the hells, preta realms, transitional phases, and so on as being autonomously existent, so you must think they also continue to exist when you’re not there. If that were true, nothing would be empty, those would not constitute dualistic concepts of subjects and objects, [582] and that would not be the expanse of the dharmakāya. [Likewise] each individual bearing his own continuum and dwelling in the duality of the self and objects would certainly be truly existent. Once the thought that ‘I exist’ has arisen and is validated, identitylessness is dismissed as a convention, and grasping at the self as ultimately existent leads you astray. Uh-oh!

“Well, my yāna does not misleadingly assert the existence of things that do not exist. Rather, it determines that all appearances are identityless, nonobjective, and merely delusive appearances — they are revealed as the one ground. So understand this! If each sentient being existed autonomously, then the buddhas would exist like that, too. In that case, they would be ascertained as being multiple, not as one ground. If you think that sentient beings exist both from their own side and as one ground, then even if one sentient being became a buddha, other sentient beings would not. In that case, there would be no way to avoid falling to one of two extremes: Either the ground would be [like] the mere eye of a needle, rather than the dharmakāya, and everyone would exist in the substrate; or else, after you had achieved enlightenment, since those sentient beings would be merged with you in the ground, you would go on revolving in saṃsāra. Thus it is very important that you fathom this and attend closely to it. Ultimately, all phenomena are appearances to the mind, without being established as autonomously existent, and since all appearances [583] and mindsets are none other than displays of nonduality, liberation is also authentic,

simultaneous freedom in the absolute space of the ground of being.”

Phase 7: How to Follow the Path of the Great Clear Light, Direct Crossing Over

“O son of the family, regarding the teachings on how fruitional liberation occurs, there are two ways of liberation: the way of liberation by the natural path of cutting through to the ground and the way of liberation in dependence upon the path of direct crossing over. By the power of practicing with unflagging enthusiasm, great, fortunate individuals who are supreme vessels for the unsurpassed, profound secret teachings first gain understanding, then experience, and finally realization. Ultimately they acquire confidence and actualize liberation.

“First, here is how external appearances dissolve into absolute space: All appearances and mindsets are the radiance of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness, so the release of this radiance as the inner glow is like salt dissolving into water. Without going or coming, birth or cessation, you are naturally liberated, while the five aggregates are pacified as displays of the five kāyas. The five lights are displays of the facets of primordial consciousness. The five elements are displays of the five facets of absolute space.¹⁹⁴ Mentation is a display of wisdom. Conditioned consciousness is a display of primordial consciousness, and the essential nature is pacified as a display of the dharmakāya, such that they are nondually self-liberated.

“The enlightenment of the mind and appearances [584] is not a transition like moving from one region to another, but rather like a dream dissolving into the space of awareness. The moment when the subject in a dream awakens is not like the subject and object during the dream, but rather like ice melting into water. The self and objects, which are not established as real, extend without limits into the expanse of the primordial ground sugatagarbha.

“The absolute space of phenomena dissolving into the absolute space of phenomena is like space dissolving into space, and wisdom dissolving into wisdom is like light dissolving into light. Primordial consciousness dissolving into primordial consciousness is like the reflection of the moon in an evaporating pool of water disappearing into the moon. The liberation of the gateways of impure saṃsāra as displays of pure primordial consciousness is like a rainbow disappearing into the sky. The indivisible liberation of appearances and mindsets

is like the dissolution of apparitions into absolute space.

“Prior to such liberation, the four attainments arise as portents. Due to your own nature manifesting as originally pure, indwelling confidence, you acquire pride that is free of any arrogant hope to achieve the sublime qualities of a buddha. Pristine awareness is self-liberated, and the agent that experiences the fruition of cause and effect vanishes without trace, resulting in your acquiring pride that is free of any fear that you will not achieve the sublime qualities of a buddha. The phenomenal world arises like an illusion, [585] and since your body, speech, and mind do engage in the activities of saṃsāra, you acquire pride that is free of any hope of not falling into saṃsāra and the miserable realms of existence. By acquiring great indwelling confidence in pristine awareness in the absolute space of the primordial protector, and by reaching the state where you cannot possibly become deluded, you acquire pride that is free of any fear of falling into saṃsāra and the miserable realms. Such fruition is unrivaled, so it is great.

“With enlightenment, you awaken from your state of slumbering unawareness and expand limitlessly into absolute space, the primordial ground, which is free of signs, all-pervading, and devoid of a center and periphery. All the sublime qualities of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness expand in the inner glow and become manifest. The essential nature [of this ground] is the great bliss of ultimate reality. Its manifest nature is the perfect enjoyment of sublime qualities. Its compassion is primordially radiant and unimpeded. It is pure, free, impartial, and devoid of all extremes of conceptual elaboration. Its dimensions are unlimited, it is endowed with all the doors to liberation, and it expands in the nature of wisdom and great primordial consciousness. Like a heap of sublime qualities, it is the authentic kāya in which the spontaneously actualized glorious qualities of great bliss emerge of themselves. The ultimate buddha is this alone, so do not search elsewhere! [586]

“On this basis you enter the path of direct crossing over, which is the way to achieve maturation and liberation. O son of the family, listen well! The practice of this profound path has three phases: (1) the preliminary practices, (2) the main practice, and (3) the subsequent attainment.

“(1) The preliminary practices entail stages of purification of the body, speech, and mind. (a) First, purify the body, in order to turn away from attachment and clinging to the body and to dispel obstacles. Go to a solitary, isolated, uninhabited region and pray to the primordial consciousness guardians and mundane guardians, requesting them to avert obstacles to the grounds and

paths. Then generate the altruistic motivation, ‘In order to free all sentient beings of the three realms from the miserable prison of mundane existence, I shall differentiate saṃsāra from nirvāṇa, and in one life and with one body, I shall progress to the state of Jina Samantabhadra.’

“Then imagine countless rays of light emanating from the body of the guru visualized at the crown of your head. They enter your body through the crown, thoroughly dispelling illnesses, demonic influences, vices, obscurations, and habitual propensities, together with the material aggregate of flesh and bone. Then visualize your own body as an upright blue vajra inside a great bindu imbued with the five facets of primordial consciousness, [587] and join your palms above the crown of your head while spreading out your elbows. Press the heels of your feet together and stand with your knees spread out to the sides. On the outer periphery of the bindu imagine a mass of fire blazing forth, sending out sparks. As for pure recollection in this regard, know that the three upper prongs [of the vajra] symbolize the essential nature [of emptiness], the manifest nature [of luminosity], and [all-pervasive] compassion; the three lower prongs symbolize the dharmakāya, saṃbhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya; and their union in the center symbolizes the nonduality of skillful means and wisdom. Then lie on your back and engage in these physical acts with pure recollection as you did before. By diligently applying yourself to such practice for forty days, malevolent spirits and obstructive forces will be temporarily pacified by seeing your body as a blazing vajra. Finally, physical obscurations will be purified, and you will become enlightened, with your body displayed as a vajra body.

“(b) Second, purify speech, in order to abandon attachment to speech. At your crown, imagine the guru, whose great, secret speech appears as five-colored lights dissolving into your throat, completely purifying and clearing out all the impure channels, vital energies, elements, illnesses, demonic influences, vices, and obscurations, together with their habitual propensities. Imagine your body as the Lord of Secrets, Vajrapāṇi, with [588] his massive body and thick limbs appearing as vast as space, devoid of inherent nature, like a rainbow in the sky. Chanting the syllable *Hūṃ*, imagine a succession of white, yellow, red, and green syllables emanating from an indigo syllable *Hūṃ*, so that all animate beings and inanimate things in the phenomenal world become displays of *Hūṃ*. Appearing, yet devoid of inherent existence, like a rainbow, imagine *Hūṃ*s filling all the thousands of realms, and slowly recite the *Hūṃ* melody: *Hūṃ*, *Hūṃ*, *Hūṃ*, *Hūṃ*, *Hūṃ*, *Hūṃ*. Then all the *Hūṃ*s enter your mouth, and all your channels, vital energies, and elements become the nature of *Hūṃ*.

Imagine your body composed of *Hūṃ* syllables the size of atoms, and slowly, beautifully sing the *Hūṃ* melody. At this time it is very important that you do not become distracted by anything else. By diligently applying yourself to such practice for ten days, this will dispel obstructive forces that make your channels and vital energies dysfunctional. Finally, the obscurations of speech will be purified, your speech will become melodious, and you will become enlightened with your speech as displays of vajra speech.



“(c) Third, for the purification of the mind, rest your body without moving, like a corpse in a charnel ground. Let your voice be silent, like that of a mute, [589] and rest your mind in an unmodified state, like a clear, cloudless sky. At times, adopting a wrathful gaze and manner, ferociously recite *Hūṃ*, *Hūṃ*, without directing your attention to any appearances. At times, while sitting in the sevenfold posture of Vairocana, rest your mind without modification in a relaxed, loose way. By practicing like this for twenty-one days, mental obscurations will be purified, you will see the self-emergent nature of pristine awareness, and you will traverse the great path.

“(2) O Vajra of Pristine Awareness, listen well and closely and bear in mind what I say, and I shall explain the stages of implementing the main practice. Here is how to practice the instructions on the great transference, which brings with it the great blessings of clairvoyance, extrasensory perception, and miraculous power: The physical postures are like that of a lion taking ferocious delight in thunder, like an elephant reclining comfortably, and like a ṛṣi examining a landscape. In dependence on these postures, know that the first gaze is upward, the second straight forward, and the third downward. The vital point for the speech is to practice breathing gently through a gap between the lips and teeth, [590] while releasing all verbal expressions and recitations and resting comfortably. The vital point for the mind is to rest in a relaxed, loose way. Settle in the natural state by means of these three methods. Resting your body

motionlessly like a corpse in a charnel ground, resting your speech in silence like that of a mute, and resting your mind in the immutable nature of absolute space and pristine awareness is called *holding your own ground by way of the three types of resting*.

“Let your body relax loosely, without tightness or any effort to control it. Let your speech relax loosely, without restraining or forcing your respiration. Let your mind relax loosely, without analytically negating or affirming anything. This is called *adherence to the three relaxations*. By keeping the body and speech still, the channels and vital energies become still. Due to their stillness, the sense faculties, appearances, and mindsets become still. You strike at the heart of the practice by way of these three kinds of stillness. By keeping the body straight, the channels straighten, and by straightening the channels, the energy-mind moves easily and becomes straight. This is called *striking the nail by way of the three kinds of straightness*.

“Then, the swift path of the body as the six lamps is as follows: In the center of the citta lamp of the flesh inside your heart [591] is the lamp of the limpid channel, one-eighth the width of a horsehair, which is limpid and clear like a hollow crystal, and its upper apertures open at the pupils of the fluid lasso lamp. Inside of that is the lamp of the pristine space of awareness, like unfurled brocade covered with rainbow patterns. Within this expanse is the lamp of empty bindus, like ripples from a stone thrown into a pond. The lamp of self-emergent wisdom acts as the basis for the emergence of the five lamps of pristine awareness, the sugatagarbha — this constitutes the self-emergent path.

“In dependence upon the great secret of the self-emergent path, you are brought to the fruition of the unsurpassed ground. This is a swift path, and nothing is more potent. Beginners should ardently focus their awareness on the eyes, which are half-open, while directing their gaze one cubit [a forearm’s length] away from the sun¹⁹⁵ or the moon,¹⁹⁶ or [directly] at a crystal or a lamp. By abiding like this, the lamp of empty bindus arises as a circle of five lights within the expanse, like unfurled brocade, of the luminous clear light of the lamp of the pristine space of awareness. In the intervening spaces, the radiance of pristine awareness arises as luminous, fine, wavy vajra strands, like floating threads of gold. [592]

“Because of the instability of the sensory faculties, in the first phase they appear to be quivering, coming, and going. Then, as you become somewhat familiar with the practice, all appearances of the lamps stabilize and persist over time. At this time, it is enough for you to face the morning light to the east,

gazing through a window and into the clear sky. Individuals who practice like this, without mistaking the path, with firm faith, who are able to maintain their samayas, and who are free of duplicity and pretense, will have their minds transferred to my Enlightened View Lineage, accomplishing the two stages,¹⁹⁷

and extraordinary experiences and realizations will arise in their mindstreams. It is my promise that they will be freed from the interferences of pitfalls and obstacles and will be liberated as a rainbow light body in one lifetime.

“(3)¹⁹⁸ O Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness, listen well! By the power of practicing with unflagging, keen enthusiasm, in reliance on these points, a sign that your faculties are stabilizing is that for however long you gaze, you will be steady, and the appearances of clear light will remain tranquil without quivering. Furthermore, your body will be able to remain still. By increasingly familiarizing yourself with this, [593] the extraordinary experiences and realizations of the four visions will arise in your mindstream, and you will definitely reach the grounds and paths of the four kinds of vidyādhara.¹⁹⁹

“First is the *vision of the direct perception of ultimate reality*: The signs that the power of the vase empowerment has impacted your mindstream are that your body feels tired and exhausted, so you do not wish to move; as for your voice, you do not wish to speak, so you remain like a mute; and as for your mind, the flow of thoughts breaks up and ceases, and you can focus where you will. These arise as the inner signs of the body, speech, and mind. It is called the vision of the direct perception of ultimate reality because unlike the nebulous, obscure meditation of cutting through, the ultimate reality of the clear light appears to your sense faculties. At this time, the visions of clear light naturally remain vast and majestic, and they arise consistently.

“Second, regarding the *vision of progress in meditative experience*, the signs that the potency of the secret empowerment has impacted your channels and vital energies are that at first various uncomfortable illnesses, such as those related to the wind and phlegm humors, may arise inwardly, from your heart up to your throat. By recognizing these as meditative experiences and practicing, they eventually pervade all the channels of your body, [594] and at times you will faint. Strong, extremely unbearable pain will arise on occasion, and you will definitely have the experience that each of your channels is being pierced and stretched. Physically, you may act coquettishly or shamelessly, and you may be compelled to behave in various drunken ways — as if you were insane. Verbally, like the babbling of a fool, words may flow forth spontaneously, and

you may sing various songs and melodies and so on. Mentally, your attention may wander aimlessly, as if your mind were insanely agitated. These are the three inner signs of the body, speech, and mind.²⁰⁰

“All appearances arise uninterruptedly in the nature of lights and bindus, and they appear to your sensory faculties as gods and demons. Various kinds of extrasensory perception will manifest. At times there may arise an unbearably strong sense of faith, devotion, and renunciation. Sometimes strong arrogance may fill your mind such that you exalt your own view. At times all appearances and mindsets manifest as suffering, and your mind is filled with misery. At times a sporadic sense of joy and bliss certainly arises. There is no doubt that all these are instances of meditative experiences.

“At such times, [595] you may be led astray by regional *ḍākinīs* and local *ḍākinīs* who appear as gods. Regional *ḍākinīs*, who are *ḍākinīs* of regions and areas, are *mātrkāś* of the absolute space of primordial consciousness who deceptively take on the name of *ḍākinīs* and make prophecies. If you take these prophecies to be true, cling to them, and practice in accordance with them, you will fall under the domination of such *ḍākinīs*, and there is no doubt that you will be endlessly deluded in the realms of *saṃsāra*. Local *ḍākinīs* are mundane *ḍākinīs* who enter the hearts of women of an area and deceive others by various means. If you fall under their influence, you will be thrown back into endless *saṃsāra*.

“At such times, by truly recognizing *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* as being nothing other than your own appearances, unreal like illusions and dreams, you come to rest in a state free of reification and clinging. As a result, the *ḍākinīs* come under your power, and you spontaneously achieve the secret supreme *siddhi* without seeking it.

“At such times, you may also be deceived by obstructing *māras*. Unstable meditative experiences and realizations may suddenly arise, you may think [596] you know the minds of others, you may have the sense that you can emanate various bodies and colors, and you may cast two shadows and reflect two images in a mirror. These are sure signs that you are in danger of falling under the domination of *māras*. When this happens, offer the smoke of frankincense, bathe yourself with the water of large and small ambrosia pills, rub the clay of an old statue onto your limbs, and recite mantras for dispelling obstacles. In so doing, they will be dispelled.

“You may be deceived and led astray by beings appearing as gods, when obstructive forces deceptively take on the form of your personal deity, proudly

showing their faces and granting prophecies. These are definitely the deceptions of māras. So if this happens, know that everything in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is nothing but your own appearances, and all forms, gods, and buddhas that are held to be substantially existent are simply delusive. Remain without clinging. By meditating on the wrathful form of your personal deity and reciting a wrathful mantra, you will certainly overcome them.²⁰¹

“In general, this phase of progress in meditative experience is a time of rough visions, and all your subtle channels and vital energies will enter into the absolute space of the great clear light of ultimate reality. Therefore, know that unpredictable kinds of illnesses and pains will arise. You may feel distress when meeting other people, [597] as if they were contaminating you, causing pain as if you were a fish writhing on hot sand. Without grasping at these experiences as being demonic or injurious, it is important that you decisively recognize them to be meditative experiences.

“Third, the *vision of reaching consummate awareness* is as follows: Due to the potency of the wisdom empowerment coming to your mind and bindus, you gain mastery over your energy-mind, and you attain the eight siddhis. As your body ripens as the clear light, you can move freely through all solid objects such as mountains and rocks. As your voice ripens and is purified as displays of vajra speech, everything you say sounds pleasant to others’ ears and benefits their mindstreams. Without reliance on causes and conditions, all Dharma words of authentic tantras, oral transmissions, and pith instructions flow forth naturally. Your mind is liberated as pristine awareness. Pristine awareness awakens within itself, and due to your eye of primordial consciousness penetrating wisdom, you see all the appearing phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa with unobscured extrasensory perception, like bright reflections of planets and stars in the great ocean, free of grasping and reifying them.

“At this time you gain mastery over pristine awareness. Therefore, without reliance on objects or contributing conditions, you do not encounter situations that throw you off course, [598] but you avoid them by your own power. Having gained mastery over appearances, you can transform even the phenomenal world into a treasure. Having gained mastery over birth, by focusing your awareness on three thousand sentient beings, three thousand nirmāṇakāyas arise to serve the needs of sentient beings. Having gained mastery over liberation, simply by directing your awareness to the great evils of the five deeds of immediate retribution,²⁰² you can be liberated from them. Having gained mastery over the outer elements, you can transform them in any way you desire. Having

gained mastery over the inner elements, your body becomes free of wrinkles and clear, like a reflection in a mirror. Your white hair becomes dark, and new teeth grow. Mudrās of the five buddha families and radiant syllables appear on your body. Your hair and nails stop growing. As a sign of being free of all outer and inner parasites, lice and nits disappear from your body. Your body becomes light like cotton, and your respiration becomes imperceptible. These are definite signs that you have come to the culmination of the authentic path.²⁰³

“The great expanse of the visions of clear light is like this: Visions in the space of awareness appear like spheres, the tips of spears, black yak-hair tents, checkered patterns, latticework and pendants, wheels, lotuses, and palaces. [599] At first the [upper] portions of the kāyas of the five families of jinas appear inside the fivefold aggregates of bindus within their expanse. In the interim the complete kāyas of single deities appear; and finally the deities and consorts appear in union.²⁰⁴ When awareness reaches its consummate state, the five buddha families appear in their respective colors, in assemblies of five, within the expanse of fivefold aggregates of bindus, all subsumed within one great bindu. The radiance of pristine awareness is majestic and steady, appearing in the form of latticework and pendants. At this time all appearances ripen as displays in the space of awareness, bindus, and kāyas of deities, and the appearance of the five elements dissolves into the space of awareness. Now the appearances of the phenomenal world are boundlessly pure. The three visions increase from the stage of the direct perception of ultimate reality, like the new moon waxing to a full moon. The full moon symbolizes the phase of consummate awareness. Taking the moon as an analogy, it does not increase from its own side; rather, it is said to increase because of its increased visibility in space. Likewise, the visions of clear light do not increase from their own side; rather, [600] due to your familiarization with all the qualities of the saṃbhogakāya, three names are given to the stages of perceiving them.

“When individuals who practice like this, without falling under the influence of contributing conditions and obstacles, come under the dominion of death, even though there is a discontinuity, if they have reached the phase of the direct perception of ultimate reality, they will find the relief [of liberation] as nirmāṇakāyas. At the phase of progress in meditative experience, they will achieve liberation as saṃbhogakāyas during the transitional phase of ultimate reality. Having reached consummate awareness, they will be self-liberated without any intermediate period.

“Fourth, this is the *vision of the extinction into ultimate reality*: Before the

extinction of the space of awareness and the bindus that arise in that way, in the indigo expanse of visions in the space of awareness, inside an indigo bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appears a fivefold assembly of indigo [deities] with Akṣobhya in the center. In the intervals between them appear blue-black vajra strands, like blue beryl garlands. From the hearts of these deities emerge threads of indigo light rays, striking your heart, upon which appear the ornaments of stacked indigo bindus like upside-down lapis lazuli bowls.

“When that is complete, in the white, luminous expanse in the space of awareness, inside a white bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appears a fivefold assembly of [deities] including Vairocana and his retinue. [601] In the intervals between them appear strings of vajra strands like crystal garlands. From the hearts of these deities emerge threads of light, white like the moon, striking your heart, upon which appear the ornaments of stacked bindus like upside-down conch bowls.

“After that is complete, in the yellow, luminous expanse of visions in the space of awareness, inside a yellow bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appears a fivefold assembly of yellow [deities] including Ratnasambhava and his retinue. In the intervals between them appear strings of vajra strands like golden garlands, large and luminous. From the hearts of these deities emerge threads of yellow light rays, striking your heart, upon which appear the ornaments of stacked bindus like upside-down golden bowls.

“After that, in the red expanse in the space of awareness, inside a red bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appears a fivefold assembly of [deities], including Amitābha with his consort in the midst of his retinue. In the intervals between them appear strings of encircling and intertwining vajra strands like before. From the hearts of these deities emerge threads of red light, striking your heart, upon which appear the ornaments of stacked bindus [602] like upside-down coral bowls.

“After that process is complete, in the green expanse of visions in the space of awareness, inside a green bindu the size of a rhinoceros-hide shield appear Amoghasiddhi and his consort, together with their retinue of four pairs of male and female bodhisattvas. In the intervals between them appear encircling and intertwining vajra strands like turquoise necklaces. From the hearts of these deities emerge green light rays, striking your heart, upon which appear stacked bindus like upside-down turquoise bowls.

“As soon as those lights appear, you receive the empowerment of great light rays, which causes your body to diminish in an expanse of light to the size of a

finger and then to vanish into clear light. All appearances of the outer physical world and its inner sentient inhabitants dissolve into clear light, leaving no trace of impure appearances. When all the maṇḍalas of herukas in the bone palace appear to you in the sky above, your own body vanishes into light, like salt dissolving into water. In that instant, your consciousness moves like a shooting star, and is just the differentiation of appearances and mindsets.

“Then the gradual extinction is like this: All the visions of clear light as kāyas and bindus [603] gradually vanish, like masses of clouds disappearing into the sky, and all pure and impure appearances are extinguished. The obscurations of the substrate dissolve into absolute space, and ignorance is dispelled in the ground of being. The self-grasping of afflictive mentation is calmed right where it is, and you are liberated from the bonds of dualistic grasping. Consciousness that grasps at objects is released into the essential nature, so the objects grasped by the intellect are extinguished.

“The eight groups of conceptualizations²⁰⁵ are transmuted into primordial consciousness, and the concepts of the mind and of the mental factors are extinguished. With the extinction of the mind and thoughts that are the basis of emergences, those emergences disappear right where they are. With the extinction of the consciousness that apprehends objects, apprehended objects are extinguished. The net of self-grasping is released, so all the defiled aggregates are extinguished.

“At this point, your body becomes like a mindless corpse in a charnel ground, and even if you were surrounded by a thousand assassins, you would not have the slightest bit of fear. Your speech becomes like an echo, reverberating all other sounds. Like mist dissolving into the sky, your mind attains nirvāṇa in the absolute space of the primordial protector, pristine awareness, so it can never be deluded again. At this time, you actualize the state of the primordial protector — your own pristine awareness. Since this does not depend on objective conditions, even if you were to have visions of three thousand buddhas, you would acquire such confidence [604] that you would not feel the slightest faith in them. Since your own pristine awareness has evenly expanded into the absolute space of the dharmakāya, devoid of signs, even if you were surrounded by a hundred thousand māras and murderers, you would have such confidence that you wouldn’t feel even a trace of fear. By reaching your own inner depths for yourself, you come upon the reality that there is no substantially existent nirvāṇa, so you acquire the confidence of having no hope in the maturation of cause and effect. By being liberated in the reality of never having been deluded

with regard to your own essential nature, you acquire the confidence of fearlessness regarding saṃsāra and the miserable states of existence.²⁰⁶

“Finally, the bonds of subtle cognitive obscurations are severed from your heart, and your limpid body, like space dissolving into space, extends limitlessly into the absolute space of phenomena, free of conceptual elaboration, as the primordially pure youthful vase kāya. This is the manifestation of the originally pure dharmakāya, resulting in authentic perfect enlightenment.

“The bodies of some people become enveloped in light and disappear into the nature of light. The bodies of others are encompassed by a shroud of light enveloped in rainbow clouds covering the sky, and they disappear into rainbows. In these two [cases] you become enlightened as a mass of light and as a great rainbow body, without the separation of body and mind. Other people, after their bodies and minds have separated, dissolve into the nature of rainbows and light [605] without leaving behind any trace of their aggregates. For some, their material bodies gradually diminish in size for as long as seven days, until finally only their hair and nails remain. These two [cases] constitute the small rainbow body. The two cases of dissolution into minute particles are differentiated in terms of how [people] are liberated by the functioning of their faculties.

“The first two [cases] entail awakening as the dharmakāya without reliance on the full lifespan. The middle two entail liberation when the lifespan is over, with two modes of liberation for people of middling faculties. The final two entail two modes of liberation for those with inferior faculties. Although some people wish for the rainbow body with no final testament, they are liberated as described previously. Those who wish for the rainbow body without any pain of illness are liberated like the middle two, and those who wish for the rainbow body with the transference of consciousness are liberated like the final two.

“There are [three ways of liberation]: the dharmakāya of entering the womb of natural liberation, the dharmakāya of nondual union, and the dharmakāya of transference to primordial consciousness. However you are liberated among these three ways, the unwavering dharmakāya manifests limitlessly as displays of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness. By means of rūpakāyas manifesting in various ways to train every individual, [606] you serve the needs of sentient beings until the ocean of sentient existence is empty, like a moon and its reflections in water.²⁰⁷

“I entrust this teaching, which synthesizes the sublime quintessence of the life force of all the jinas of the three times, to the glorious Ekajaṭī, Yakṣa Kartṭṛkā, and Planetary Māra of the Poisonous Razor, together with their

retinues. Take care of it! I commission you! Grant it to disciples of the profound heart essence. Do what is needed to avert all unfavorable conditions that would obstruct the steady increase of all the sublime qualities of the grounds and paths. Do not let it come into the hands of those with degenerate samayas, those who reject the teachings of the Buddha, conceited scholars, or those who falsely repudiate or embellish the teachings.

“Samaya: This is sealed with the seals of the body, speech, and mind, and it is to be obeyed. Behold, I am Samantabhadra, the Omnipresent Lord and Immutable Sovereign. Here is the way to awaken from the ground of delusion.”

Having spoken these words, he transformed into a blue-black bindu of light, whereupon the entire retinue instantly appeared in an expanse of light and then gradually dissolved into light, like salt dissolving into water. This light dissolved into suchness, and the space of awareness expanded limitlessly into the great bliss [607] of the secret space of Samantabhadrī.

This vast expanse of the clear-light Great Perfection appeared as the illusory display of primordial consciousness by way of the space yogin Vidyādhara Dūdjom Dorjé Trolö Tsal. When the time was ripe for disciples, this was written down and edited for the sake of fortunate students by my student named Dampa Tsechu.

May there be virtue!

167. This was the year 1863 in the Western calendar.

168. This etymologizes “śamatha” (Tib. *zhi gnas*): calmed (*zhi*) stillness (*gnas*).

169. This etymologizes “vipaśyanā” (Tib. *lhag mthong*): vivid (*lhag*) perception (*mt hong*).

170. This corresponds to the phase of “manifest mindfulness” described at CM 354.

171. These correspond to the two types of substrate: the actual substrate (corresponding to the absence of mindfulness) and the temporarily luminous substrate (corresponding to self-illuminating mindfulness).

172. The attributes of the jinas and *jinaputras* are inexhaustible ornaments of reality, which continue revolving forever, like wheels. Hence they are called “inexhaustible ornamental wheels.”

173. This etymologizes “dharmakāya” (Tib. *chos kyi sku*): dharma (*chos*) kāya (*sku*).

174. This etymologizes “saṃbhogakāya” (Tib. *longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*): saṃbhoga (*longs spyod rdzogs*) kāya (*sku*).

175. This etymologizes “nirmāṇakāya” (Tib. *sprul pa'i sku*): nirmāṇa (*sprul pa*) kāya (*sku*).

176. This etymologizes “svabhāvikakāya” (Tib. *ngo bo nyid kyi sku*): svabhāva (*ngo bo nyid*) kāya (*sku*).

177. This etymologizes “immutable vajrakāya” (Tib. *mi 'gyur rdo rje sku*): immutable (*mi 'gyur*) vajra (*rdo rje*) kāya (*sku*).

178. This etymologizes “pristine awareness” (Tib. *rig pa*): the Tibetan components do not correspond directly to the translated terms.
179. This etymologizes “secret mantra Vajrayāna” (Tib. *gsang sngags rdo rje'i theg pa*): secret (*gsang*) mantra (*sngags*) vajra (*rdo rje*) yāna (*theg pa*).
180. This etymologizes “ultimate bodhicitta” (Tib. *don dam byang chub kyi sems*): reality (*don*) ultimate (*dam pa*), pure (*byang*), full (*chub*) mind (*sems*).
181. This etymologizes “originally pure ground of the Great Perfection” (Tib. *zhi ka dag rdzogs chen*): ground (*zhi*), originally pure (*ka dag*), perfection (*rdzogs*), great (*chen*).
182. This etymologizes “spontaneously actualized youthful vase kāya” (Tib. *lhun grub gzhon nu bum pa'i sku*): spontaneously actualized (*lhun grub*) youthful (*gzhon nu*) vase (*bum pa*) kāya (*sku*).
183. This etymologizes “sole bindu” (Tib. *thig le nyag gcig*): bindu (*thig le*), sole (*nyag gcig*).
184. This etymologizes “complete consummation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa” (Tib. *'khor 'das 'ub chub*): saṃsāra (*'khor*), nirvāṇa (*'das*), complete (*'ub*) consummation (*chub*).
185. This etymologizes “vajra essence” (Tib. *rdo rje'i snying po*): vajra (*rdo rje*) essence (*snying po*).
186. This is so called because configurations of all appearances and mindsets withdraw into the substrate when you faint, when you fall into deep sleep, and when you die.
187. These four correspond to the four meditative absorptions (Skt. *samāpatti*) of the formless realm.
188. This paragraph compares with CM 409–10.
189. This paragraph compares with CM 410–11.
190. These nine paragraphs compare with CM 411–14.
191. Emending *rnam rtog snyis su thag chod* (misspelling) to *rnam rtog nyid du thag chod* (one ascertains [all objective and subjective phenomena] as thoughts).
192. These five sentences compare with CM 417.
193. Emending *sprul sku* (nirmāṇakāya) to *longs sku* (saṃbhogakāya).
194. The five facets of absolute space are the five facets of primordial consciousness.
195. Skt. *sūrya*.
196. Skt. *candra*.
197. The two stages are those of generation and completion.
198. Although this heading is not found in the text, it appears that the discussion of the subsequent attainment resulting from the previously explained practices begins here.
199. Nyingma tantras describe four levels of vidyādhara. In ascending order of realization, they are the matured vidyādhara, vidyādhara with mastery over life, mahāmudrā vidyādhara, and the spontaneously actualized vidyādhara.
200. This paragraph compares with CM 437–38.
201. These five paragraphs compare with CM 450–52.
202. See *deeds of immediate retribution*, *five* in glossary.
203. These two paragraphs compare with CM 439–40.
204. These three sentences compare with CM 438.

[205](#). See page 122, note 147.

[206](#). These nine paragraphs compare with CM 441–45.

[207](#). These three paragraphs compare with CM 447–49.

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Outline of *Essence of Clear Meaning*

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2. The Title of the Dharma That Arises from It

C. How the Title Was Chosen

D. The Reason for That Choice

II. The Meaning of the Text

A. The Homage as a Branch of the Text as a Whole

B. The Actual Explanation of the Meaning of the Tantra

1. The Account of the Cause That Gave Rise to the Tantra
 - a. How the Appearances of Phenomena Dissolved into the Absolute Space of Phenomena
 - b. How the Nature of Existence of Ultimate Reality Manifested
 - c. How Spontaneously Actualized Appearances Arose as the Teacher and His Circle of Disciples
 - d. The Addendum of the Qualities of Disciples

Phase 1: Taking the Impure Mind as the Path

2. The Discussion of the Contributing Conditions
3. The Resultant Comprehension of the Actual Meaning of the Tantra
 - a. The Path of Cutting Through to Original Purity
 - i. Identifying the Creator of All Phenomena as the Mind
 - ii. Establishing the Mind as Baseless and Rootless
 - iii. How Individuals with Specific Faculties May Enter the Path
 - A' How Individuals of Superior Faculties Enter the Path
 - B' How Individuals of Middling and Inferior Faculties Enter the

Path

- 1' How Individuals of Middling Faculties Enter the Path
- 2' How Individuals of Inferior Faculties Enter the Path
 - a' Taking Aspects of the Mind as the Path
 - i' The Teaching
 - ii' The Elaborate Explanation of How This Occurs
 - A" Mindfulness of the Essential Nature of the Path
 - B" Specific Meditative Experiences to Be Purified
 - C" Recognizing the Essential Nature of That Which Is to Be Abandoned and Its Direct Remedy as the Foremost Path
 - 1" Recognizing the Essential Nature of That Which Is to Be Abandoned
 - 2" Presenting the Direct Remedy as the Foremost Path
 - D" How Never to Be Separated from the Experience of the Pith Instructions
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- b' Taking the Essential Nature as the Path
 - i' The Path Pristine Awareness, Free of Conceptual Elaboration
 - A" The Teaching
 - B" The Elaborate Explanation
 - 1" The Six Distinctions of Pristine Awareness, Separate from the Mind
 - 2" The Essential Nature of Resting in the Innate Nature
 - 3" How to Perfect the Qualities of the Path and Fruition
 - 4" The Greatness of Individuals Who Realize This

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- ii' Directly Identifying Within Yourself the Ground Pristine Awareness, the Great Freedom from Extremes
 - A" The Nature of the Pure Ground
 - 1" How the Delusive Appearances of Saṃsāra Do Not in Fact Exist

- a" Determining the Identitylessness of Subjective Persons
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 - B"" Recognizing Their Emptiness by Their Mere Appearance
- b" Determining the Identitylessness of Objective Phenomena
 - i" Seeking the Bases of Designation of Names
 - ii" Destroying Grasping at the Permanence of Things
 - iii" Combating the Faults of Benefit and Harm
 - iv" Collapsing the False Cave of Hopes and Fears
- c" Fundamentally Recognizing Them as One Emptiness
 - i" The Short Summary
 - ii" The Elaborate Explanation
 - A"" Identifying the Absolute Space of Phenomena as That Which Is to Be Realized
 - B"" Subjective Primordial Consciousness That Arises in Accordance with That
 - C"" Pith Instructions on Dispelling Obstacles and Enhancing Practice

Phase 4: Determining the Characteristics and Qualities of the Ground

- 2" An Explanation of the Characteristics of the Nondelusive Essential Nature, the Kāyas, and Facets of Primordial Consciousness
 - a" The Teaching
 - b" The Explanation
 - i" The Ground Great Perfection of Existence
 - A"" The Actual Characteristics of the Ground
 - B"" The Context of Skillful Means and Wisdom
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 - 2"" The Context of Wisdom

- 3''' Their Purpose and Their Presentation
- C''' The Summary
- ii'' The Path Great Perfection of Realization
 - A''' The Perfection of the Presentations of the Yānas up to Anuyoga in the Path of the Great Perfection
 - 1''' The Elaborate Explanation
 - 2''' The Summary
 - B''' Unmistaken Teachings on the Path of the Great Perfection Itself
- iii'' The Fruitional Great Perfection of Actualization
 - A''' The Actual Fruition
 - B''' How It Is Free of the Two Extremes
- B'' The Genesis of Conventional Names

Phase 5: Determining Secret Dualistic Grasping and Revealing the Way of Natural Liberation

- C'' The Process of Delusion in Impure Saṃsāra
 - 1'' Inner Dualistic Grasping
 - a'' The Summary
 - b'' The Elaborate Explanation
 - i'' Apprehended Objects
 - ii'' Apprehending Minds
 - iii'' How Objects and Minds Transform and Dissolve in an Instant
 - 2'' Secret Dualistic Grasping
 - 3'' How the Three Realms Are Not Other than Your Own Appearances
 - 4'' Rūdra as the Essential Nature of Dualistic Grasping of Saṃsāra
 - 5'' The Wisdom of Realizing the Identitylessness of Clinging to Reality

Phase 6: Teachings on the Essential Points of Practice and Their Key Distinctions

- D" Prayers for Swiftly Realizing the Meaning of the Tantra and Experiencing Liberation
- E" Devotion to the Pith Instructions for the Moment of Death and So Forth If You Have Not Earnestly Devoted Yourself to the Tenet System in This Lifetime
- F" Unique Teachings of the Great Perfection on Key Distinctions
 - 1" Cutting Through Misconceptions by Hearing and Thinking
 - a" The Distinction between the Substrate and the Dharmakāya
 - b" The Distinction between Mentation and Wisdom
 - c" The Distinction between the Mind and Pristine Awareness
 - d" The Distinction between Conditioned Consciousness and Primordial Consciousness
 - e" The Distinction between Deluded Sentient Beings and Liberated Buddhas
 - f" The Distinction between Understanding and Realization
 - 2" The Need for Practice after Having Cut Through Misconceptions
- The Closing Summary of Those Explanations

Phase 7: How to Follow the Path of the Great Clear Light, Direct Crossing Over

- b. The Path of Direct Crossing Over to Spontaneous Actualization
 - i. The Summary
 - ii. The Elaborate Explanation
 - A' The General Meaning
 - 1' The Special Preliminary Practices
 - 2' How to Engage in the Main Practice
 - a' A General Synthesis of Direct Crossing Over and So Forth
 - b' Recognizing the Principal Points of This Specific Phase
 - i' The Lamps of the Ground of the Nature of Existence
 - ii' The Lamps of the Yogic Path
 - c' Identifying the Most Important Thing to Know in This Phase
 - d' The Vital Points of the Body, Speech, and Mind
 - e' The Three Vital Points for Viewing the Clear Light

- f' Establishing the Basis with the Three Kinds of Stillness
- g' How to Practice

B' The Meaning of the Text

- 1' How Direct Crossing Over Is Superior Even to Cutting Through
- 2' How the Four Visions Gradually Arise
 - a' The Vision of the Direct Perception of Ultimate Reality
 - b' The Vision of Progress in Meditative Experience
 - c' The Vision of Reaching Consummate Awareness
 - d' The Vision of the Extinction into Ultimate Reality
- 3' How Those of Superior Faculties Achieve Liberation in This Lifetime
- 4' The Specifics of Progress in Meditative Experience
- 5' How People of Middling and Inferior Faculties Who Do Not Reach the Culmination of the Path in This Lifetime Are Liberated in the Transitional Phases of Ultimate Reality and of Becoming
 - a' The Essential Nature
 - b' Divisions
 - c' Individual Ways of Transforming the Transitional Phases into the Path

Phase 8: How to Dwell in the Ground of Being

- c. The Manner in Which the Indivisible Nature of the Ground and the Fruition Is Actualized
 - i. Identifying the Essential Nature of the Fruition That Is to Be Achieved
 - ii. The Explanation of How to Achieve It
 - iii. How to Serve the Needs of Others after Achieving This

III. The Colophon

Glossary

THE GLOSSARY lists key terms in English, Tibetan, and Sanskrit from all three volumes in the series. A list of key Dharma enumerations found in the glossary, such as “one taste,” “two truths,” and “three realms,” is given in numerical order at the end of the glossary.

Many definitions are taken from the texts in this series. References use the following abbreviations followed by the folio numbers that appear within the texts in square brackets:

- SV The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra
- CM Essence of Clear Meaning
- MF The Foolish Dharma of an Idiot Clothed in Mud and Feathers
- VS The Enlightened View of Samantabhadra
- BM Buddhahood Without Meditation
- FP The Fine Path to Liberation
- GD Garland for the Delight of the Fortunate
- VE The Vajra Essence

Additional sources include the following:

- Buswell, Robert E., Jr., and Donald S. Lopez, Jr. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Dudjom Rinpoche. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991.
- Duff, Tony. *The Illuminator Tibetan-English Encyclopaedic Dictionary*. Kathmandu: Padma Karpo Translation Committee, 2014.
- Keown, Damien. *A Dictionary of Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Rangjung Yeshe Wiki — Dharma Dictionary at http://rywiki.tsadra.org/index.php/Main_Page

Abhirati (Skt., Tib. *mngon par dga' ba*). Lit. “Higher Joy,” this is the

buddhafield of Akṣobhya in the eastern direction.

abodes of Heruka, ten (Tib. *he ru ka'i gnas bcu*). The ten are the (1) abodes (Tib. *gnas*, Skt. *pīṭha*), (2) outer abodes (Tib. *nye ba'i gnas*, Skt. *upapīṭha*), (3) fields (Tib. *zhing*, Skt. *kṣetra*), (4) outer fields (Tib. *nye ba'i zhing*, Skt. *upakṣetra*), (5) pleasing places (Tib. *tshan do*, Skt. *chandoha*), (6) outer pleasing places (Tib. *nye ba'i tshan do*, Skt. *upachandoha*), (7) meeting places (Tib. *'du ba*, Skt. *melāpaka*), (8) outer meeting places (Tib. *nye ba'i 'du ba*, Skt. *upamelāpaka*), (9) charnel grounds (Tib. *dur khrod*, Skt. *śmaśāna*), and (10) outer charnel grounds (Tib. *nye ba'i dur khrod*, Skt. *upaśmaśāna*).

absolute space of phenomena (Tib. *chos kyi dbyings*, Skt. *dharmadhātu*). The ultimate ground of all phenomena in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. This does not refer to space in the reified, Newtonian sense, but rather to an ultimate dimension of space out of which all manifestations of relative space-time and mass-energy emerge, in which they are present, and into which they eventually dissolve. Likewise, all manifestations of relative states of consciousness and mental processes emerge as displays of primordial consciousness, which has always been indivisible from the absolute space of phenomena.

absolute space of the ground (Tib. *gzhi dbyings*). The ground of all phenomena in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

ācārya (Skt., Tib. *slob dpon*). An accomplished teacher, especially of Dharma.

accumulations, two (Tib. *tshogs gnyis*, Skt. *dviṣaṃbhāra*). The twofold accumulations of merit (*bsod nams*), which culminates in the achievement of the form (*rūpakāya*) of a buddha, and of wisdom (*ye shes*), which culminates in the achievement of the mind (*dharmakāya*) of a buddha.

activities, four enlightened (Tib. *phrin las bzhi*). Pacifying, enriching, powerful, and wrathful enlightened activities.

activity, nine kinds of (Tib. *bya ba dgu sprugs*). The nine kinds of activity include the body's (1) outer activities, such as walking, sitting, and moving about, (2) inner activities of prostrations and circumambulations, and (3)

secret activities of ritual dancing, performing mudrās, and so on; the speech’s (4) outer activities, such as all kinds of delusional chatter, (5) inner activities, such as reciting liturgies, and (6) secret activities, such as counting propitiatory mantras of your personal deity; and the mind’s (7) outer activities, such as thoughts aroused by the five poisons and the three poisons, (8) inner activities of mind training and cultivating positive thoughts, and (9) the secret activity of dwelling in mundane states of dhyāna. See GD 297, VE 322.

adhisāra (Skt., Tib. *’khrul ’khor*). Yogic practices of the vital energies, channels, and bindus, including āsana, prāṇāyāma, movement, and visualization.

Akaniṣṭha (Skt., Tib. *’og min*). Lit. “unsurpassed,” the buddhafield of Samantabhadra, in which every being finally achieves supreme enlightenment.

ambrosia (Tib. *bdud rtsi*, Skt. *amṛta*). Lit. “deathless” or immortality, this is one result of spiritual practice and also refers to sacramental substances.

Anuyāna (Skt., Tib. *a nu’i theg pa*). The spiritual vehicle of anuyoga, which corresponds to the stage of completion, following the mahāyoga.

appearances, delusive (Tib. *’khrul snang*). The reified appearances of phenomena arising due to delusion. The world of appearances (*snang lugs*) is the basis of delusion, while the nature of existence (*gnas lugs*) is the basis of liberation.

appearances, three (Tib. *snang gsum*). The appearances of the apprehended object, the apprehending mind, and the body of a sentient being.

appearances, three modes of (Tib. *snang tshul gsum*). Appearances in the form of one’s environment, one’s body, and the five sensory objects.

ārya (Skt., Tib. *’phags pa*). A being who has gained direct realization of ultimate reality.

āryabodhisattva (Skt., Tib. *’phags pa’i byang chub sems dpa*). A bodhisattva who has gained direct realization of ultimate reality.

asura (Skt., Tib. *lha ma yin*). A titan, or demigod, whose existence is characterized by aggression and conflict with the devas.

atiyoga (Skt., Tib. *shin tu rnal 'byor*). The “extraordinary yoga,” which is equivalent to the Great Perfection, or Dzokchen, the pinnacle of the nine spiritual vehicles.

attainment, subsequent (Tib. *rjes thob*, Skt. *prṣṭhalabdha*). Postmeditation, or the period subsequent to formal meditation.

attentional object of reference (Tib. *gtad so*). The object of a grasping mind.

autonomous (Tib. *rang rgyud*, Skt. *svatantra*). That which functions independently. Characteristic reasoning of the Svātantrika Madhyamaka system.

avadhūti (Skt., Tib. *kun 'dar ma, rtsa dbu ma*). The central of the three main channels running vertically through the subtle body; also known in Sanskrit as the *madhyamā*.

awareness (Tib. *rig pa*, Skt. *vidyā*). See pristine awareness.

āyatana (Skt., Tib. *skye mched*). Any of the twelve sense bases. Any of the five “signs” (Tib. *mtshan ma*, Skt. *nimitta*) that eventually arise due to meditating on the generic emblems of the five elements of earth, water, fire, air, and space.

baling torma (Tib. *ba ling gtor ma*, Skt. *bali*). A ritual offering cake in which the nutritive essence of the universe is synthesized and which acts as a source of all desirable things. See VE 211.

bardo (Tib. *bar do*, Skt. *antarabhāva*). Usually, the intermediate state that follows death and is prior to one’s next rebirth. More generally, any of the six transitional phases of living, dreaming, meditation, dying, ultimate reality, and becoming.

basis of designation (Tib. *gdags gzhi*). Objective basis upon which a conceptual designation is made.

bhaga (Skt., Tib. *bha ga*). The womb of the buddha mind.

Bhagavān (Skt., Tib. *bcom ldan 'das*). Lit. “Blessed One,” an epithet of the Buddha. The Tibetan term has the connotation of one who has conquered all obscurations, is imbued with all excellent qualities, and has transcended saṃsāra.

bhīma (Skt., Tib. *'jigs byed*). A class of protectors of the Dharma.

bhūta (Skt., Tib. *'byung po*). An “elemental” demonic force or being.

bile (Tib. *mkhris pa*, Skt. *pitta*). In the Āyurvedic and Tibetan medical systems, the bodily constituent, or humor, responsible for heat, metabolism, and transformation.

bindu (Skt., Tib. *thig le*). An orb of light. The red and white essential drops of vital fluids within the body, included within the triad of channels, vital energies, and bindus. The dot or small circle above Tibetan and Sanskrit syllables such as *Hūṃ*.

bindu, sole (Tib. *thig le nyag cig*). The one dharmakāya, which is replete with all the qualities of the buddhas and which encompasses the entirety of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

bliss (Tib. *byin brlabs*, Skt. *adhiṣṭāna*). Powerful realization or empowerment that is experienced in connection with a guru or a physical place or object associated with a realized being. Consecration of an inanimate object or substance.

bodhicitta (Skt., Tib. *byang chub kyi sems*). Lit. “awakening mind,” it is described as having two relative aspects called aspirational and engaged, along with its absolute, ultimate aspect. The nominal cultivation of *aspirational bodhicitta* means wishing to achieve enlightenment in order to liberate all sentient beings in saṃsāra. Bodhicitta is called *engaged* when one actually practices with this motivation to achieve buddhahood. In Vajrayāna, the red and white bodhicittas are the female and male regenerative fluids, which are composed of the red and white bindus. In the Great Perfection, bodhicitta is the primordial, originally pure ground, which

pervades the whole of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. See VE 19, 119, 204–5, 291, 294.

bodhicitta, aspirational (Tib. *smon pa'i sems bskyed*, Skt. *praṇidhicittotpāda*).

The altruistic motivation to achieve perfect enlightenment in order to liberate all sentient beings of the three realms from the ocean of suffering of mundane existence and bring them to the state of omniscience. See VE 204–5.

bodhicitta, cultivation of (Tib. *sems bskyed*, Skt. *bodhicittotpāda*). The generation and development of bodhicitta by skillful means, such as meditation on the four immeasurables, recitation, mind training (Tib. *lo jong*), and the exchange of self and others (Tib. *gtong len*). See VE 119, 204–5.

bodhicitta, engaged (Tib. *'jug pa'i sems bskyed*, Skt. *prasthānacittotpāda*).

Steadfast engagement in practices to cultivate bodhicitta as profound means to simultaneously accomplish the six perfections for the sake of all beings. See VE 204–5.

bodhicitta, ultimate (Tib. *don dam byang chub kyi sems*, Skt.

paramāṛthabodhicitta). In the Great Perfection, the realization of ultimate bodhicitta is the actualization of identitylessness as the play of the consummation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, free of activity and conceptual elaboration. Precious bodhicitta subsumes all authentic realities and is the ultimate source of all phenomena; it manifests the wisdom of realizing identitylessness, liberating the three realms of saṃsāra as the play of the three kāyas. See CM 396; GD 282; VS 526, 544; VE 19, 119, 174, 204–5, 291, 294–95.

bodhisattva (Skt., Tib. *byang chub sems dpa'*). A being in whom bodhicitta arises effortlessly and who devotes himself or herself to the cultivation of the six perfections, in order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings.

Bodhisattvayāna (Skt., Tib. *byang chub sems dpa'i theg pa*). The spiritual vehicle of the bodhisattvas, in which one seals saṃsāra and nirvāṇa with bodhicitta.

box, incarceration (Tib. 'brub khung). A three-sided ritual container, often made of metal, black on the outside and red on the inside, and sometimes marked with skulls. It is visualized in various ways: as the space of awareness of ultimate reality, as the miserable states of existence, as the womb of the consort, and as a prison.

brahmin (Skt., Tib. *bram ze*). A member of the priestly class in the Vedic caste system of India.

buddha (Skt., Tib. *sangs rgyas*). Lit. “awakened one,” an enlightened being in whom all mental afflictions and obscurations are dispelled and all excellent qualities are brought to perfection.

buddha nature (Tib. *sangs rgyas kyi khams*, Skt. *buddhadhātu*). The primordially pure, essential nature of the mind, equivalent to pristine awareness, which is none other than the dharmakāya. It may be regarded provisionally as one’s capacity for achieving spiritual awakening.

buddhafield (Tib. *sangs rgyas kyi zhing khams*, Skt. *buddhakṣetradhātu*). Lit. “buddha field-realm,” this is a “pure realm,” which is brought forth spontaneously from a buddha’s enlightened mind.

cakra (Skt., Tib. *rtsa khor*). A “wheel” of channels through which vital energies course. The fivefold classification of the cakras includes the cakra of great bliss at the crown of the head, the cakra of enjoyment at the throat, the dharmacakra at the heart, the cakra of emanation at the navel, and the cakra of sustaining bliss at the genital region. See VE 280.

cakravartin (Skt., Tib. 'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po). Lit. “wheel-turning monarch,” a worldly ruler said to possess seven precious things, including a wheel as the source of power.

caṇḍāla (Skt., Tib. *gdol pa'i rigs*). The lowest subdivision of the commoners caste (*śūdra*) of Vedic India, known in English as “untouchables.”

caṇḍālī (Skt., Tib. *gtum mo*). A meditative practice designed to bring forth realization of emptiness, with a side effect of generating intense heat arising from the navel cakra. Great, empty awareness, devoid of activity, the fire of

primordial consciousness, the union of bliss and emptiness, which blazes as a display of the power of the five facets of primordial consciousness. See VE 283–90.

channel (Tib. *rtsa*, Skt. *nāḍī*). A coarse or subtle conduit included within the triad of channels, vital energies, and bindus. The three principal channels are *avadhūti*, *lalanā*, and *rasanā*. The quintessence of the channels is the *hollow crystal kati channel*. See CM 387; VE 279–80.

channel, life-force (Tib. *srog rtsa*). The channel in the heart through which flow the life-sustaining vital energies, corresponding to the aorta of the physical body and the *avadhūti* of the subtle body.

channel grounds, eight great (Tib. *dur khrod chen po brgyad*, Skt. *aṣṭamahāśmaśāna*). Most Fierce (Tib. *Gtum drag*, Skt. *Caṇḍogrā*), Dense Thicket (Tib. *Tshang tshing 'khrigs pa*, Skt. *Gahvara*), Blazing Vajra (Tib. *Rdo rje bar ba*, Skt. *Vajrajvala*), Endowed with Skeletons (Tib. *Keng rus can*, Skt. *Karaṇkin*), Cool Grove (Tib. *Bsil ba'i tshal*, Skt. *Śītavana*), Black Darkness (Tib. *Mun pa nag po*, Skt. *Ghorāndhakāra*), Resonant with “Kilikili” (Tib. *Ki li ki lir sgra sgrog pa*, Skt. *Kilikilārava*), and Wild Cries of “Ha-ha” (Tib. *Ha ha rgod pa*, Skt. *Aṭṭahāsa*).

citta (Skt., Tib. *sems*). This term is generally translated as “mind” and refers to the dualistic, conditioned mind that arises in dependence upon prior causes and conditions, including the substrate consciousness and the body.

citta lamp of the flesh (Tib. *tsitta sha'i sgron ma*). The “lamp” located at the heart and included among the six lamps discussed in the teachings on the direct crossing over. See CM 423, VS 590–91, VE 424.

Cittamātrayāna (Skt., Tib. *sems tsam pa'i theg pa*). The “mind only” spiritual vehicle, which is perfected by realizing that appearances are not other than the mind. See CM 390, VE 302.

clear light (Tib. *'od gsal*, Skt. *prabhāsvara*). The illuminating nature of pristine awareness.

cling (Tib. *zhen pa*). To be strongly attached to something, reifying and grasping

at it without realizing its emptiness.

cogitation (Tib. *bsam mno*). Dualistic mental activity involving reification of subject and object.

conceptual elaboration (Tib. *spros pa*, Skt. *prapañca*). Conceptual constructs, such as those of existence, nonexistence, birth, and cessation.

cone (Tib. *a thung*). A hot, red cone visualized at the navel cakra in caṇḍālī meditation. See CM 408, VE 283–90.

confidence, acquiring (Tib. *gdeng thob pa*). Identifying awareness, then bringing forth spacious awareness, free of activity, and by practicing that uninterruptedly, finally achieving stability within oneself.

confidences, four (Tib. *gdeng bzhi*, *gding bzhi*). (1) The confidence that even if one were to have visions of three thousand buddhas, one would not feel the slightest faith in them; (2) the confidence that even if one were surrounded by a hundred thousand māras and murderers, one wouldn't feel even a trace of fear; (3) the confidence of having no hope in the maturation of cause and effect; and (4) the confidence of fearlessness regarding saṃsāra and the miserable states of existence. See CM 445, VS 603–4, GD 298, VE 462.

consciousness, conditioned (Tib. *rnam par shes pa*, Skt. *viññāna*). The clear and knowing qualities of the mind that emerge in the aspect of the object and are bound by reification. Compare with *primordial consciousness*.

consciousness, eight aggregates of (Tib. *rnam shes tshogs brgyad*, Skt. *aṣṭaviññāna*). The five types of sensory consciousness, the mental consciousness, the substrate consciousness, and afflictive mentation.

consciousness, subliminal (Tib. *shes pa bag nyal*). Latent tendencies or habitual propensities underlying the manifestations of consciousness.

creative displays; creative expressions (Tib. *rtsal*). Effulgences or manifestations, such as the creative displays of primordial consciousness.

cutting through (Tib. *khregs chod*). The first of the two major phases in the practice of the Great Perfection, aimed at gaining direct, sustained realization

of the original purity of pristine awareness.

ḍākinī (Skt., Tib. *mkha' 'gro ma*). A wisdom being who is an aspect of the absolute space of primordial consciousness and the root of enlightened activity. A highly realized female bodhisattva, who manifests in the world in order to serve sentient beings. A mundane or worldly female. The Tibetan term means a female “sky-goer,” referring to the fact that such beings course in the expanse of absolute space. See GD 226–27, VE 196–98.

ḍākinī, local (Tib. *gnas kyi mkha' 'gro*). A mundane *ḍākinī*. See CM 450.

ḍākinī, regional (Tib. *zhing gi mkha' 'gro*). A mundane *ḍākinī*. See CM 450.

ḍamaru (Skt.). A ritual hand-drum used, for instance, in the practice of severance.

damsi (Tib. *dam sri, dam tshig la gnod pa'i sri*). A “samaya demon” which has taken on such rebirth due to transgressing the samayas of secret mantra.

datura (Tib. *dha dhu ra*, Skt. *dhattūra*). A genus of nine species of toxic, hallucinogenic flowering plants, whose ingestion results in a complete inability to differentiate reality from fantasy.

deeds of immediate retribution, five (Tib. *mtshams med pa lnga*, Skt. *pañcānantarya*). Actions with such negative karmic force that upon death, the perpetrator is reborn immediately in hell, bypassing the intermediate period: matricide, patricide, killing an arhat, creating a schism in the Saṅgha, and maliciously drawing the blood of a tathāgata.

deity, personal (Tib. *yi dam*, Skt. *iṣṭadevatā*). The enlightened manifestation, or embodiment, chosen as one’s primary object of refuge and meditative practice.

delusion (Tib. *'khrul pa*, Skt. *bhrānti*). The principal delusion is the reification of oneself and other phenomena, which acts as the root of all other mental afflictions.

demon (Tib. *'dre*). Negative thoughts, rooted in ego-grasping, which cause saṃsāra to come into existence.

dependent origination (Tib. *rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*, Skt. *pratītyasamutpāda*). The arising of all phenomena in dependence on causes and conditions.

desire realm (Tib. *'dod pa'i kham*s, Skt. *kāmadhātu*). The six domains of the desire realm, which are spontaneously actualized by mentation, are those of the gods, asuras, humans, animals, pretas, and hell beings.

deva (Skt., Tib. *lha*). A “god” within saṃsāra, who experiences great joy, extrasensory perception, and paranormal abilities, but who suffers greatly when faced with death.

devas, eight great (Tib. *lha chen po brgyad*). Maheśvara, Indra, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Kāmeśvara, Gaṇapati, Bhṛṅgiridhi, and Kumāraśaṇmukha.

devī (Skt., Tib. *lha mo*). A female deva.

Dharma (Skt., Tib. *chos*). Spiritual teachings and practices that lead one irreversibly away from suffering and the source of suffering and toward the attainment of liberation and enlightenment.

dharmacakra (Skt., Tib. *chos kyi 'khor lo*). The cakra at the heart, the “wheel of Dharma.”

dharmadhātu (Skt., Tib. *chos kyi dbyings*). See absolute space of phenomena.

dharmakāya (Skt., Tib. *chos kyi sku*). The “enlightened embodiment of truth,” which is the mind of the buddhas.

dharmapāla (Skt., Tib *chos skyong*). Dharma protector. This may be a worldly being oath-bound to protect the Dharma and sentient beings (*'jig ten pa*) or a wisdom deity who is an enlightened manifestation of compassion (*'jig ten las 'das pa*). The chief protectress of the Dzokchen teachings is Ekajaṭī.

dhyāna (Skt., Tib. *bsam gtan*). An advanced state of meditative stabilization included in the form realm, including the four dhyānas.

dhyāna, threshold to first (Tib. *nyer bsdogs*, Skt. *sāmantaka*). The threshold between the desire realm and the form realm, which is experientially

accessed with the achievement of śamatha. It is experienced when one's coarse mind dissolves into the substrate consciousness, corresponding to the experience of self-illuminating mindfulness.

differentiating saṃsāra and nirvāṇa (Tib. 'khor 'das ru shan). The direct crossing over preliminary practice of differentiating saṃsāra from nirvāṇa with respect to the body, speech, and mind. See VS 586–89, VE 395–418.

direct crossing over (Tib. thod rgal, Skt. vyutkrāntaka). The second of the two phases of the practice of the Great Perfection, which is aimed at realizing the spontaneous manifestations of the dharmakāya.

direct perception of ultimate reality (Tib. chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba, Skt. pratyakṣa). The first of the four visions that arise in the practice of direct crossing over, in which one directly ascertains the nature of existence of suchness, or ultimate reality (dharmatā). This realization corresponds to the attainment of the first āryabodhisattva stage, and results in the confidence of never returning to saṃsāra.

display (Tib. rol pa, Skt. lalita). The manifestation of reality unfolding as a “dance” or “play.”

dohā (Skt., Tib. mgur). A song of contemplative realization, such as those of the Indian mahāsiddha Saraha and the Tibetan yogi Milarepa.

doors of liberation, three (Tib. rnam thar sgo gsum, Skt. vimokṣamukha). Emptiness, signlessness, and desirelessness.

dregs, five (Tib. snyigs ma lnga, Skt. pañcakaṣāya). Degenerate lifespans, mental afflictions, sentient beings, times, and views.

Dzokchen (Tib. rdzogs pa chen po, Skt. mahāsandhi). The Great Perfection, or atiyoga, the pinnacle of the nine vehicles transmitted by the Nyingma school. The clear-light absolute nature of reality, having no center or periphery, from which all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa spontaneously arise as creative displays. See VE 301–11.

ego-grasping (Tib. ngar 'dzin, Skt. ahaṃkāra). Reification of one's own identity.

elements (Tib. *kham*s, Skt. *dhātu*). The eighteen elements of conscious experience, consisting of the twelve sense bases and the six consciousnesses.

elements, five derivative (Tib. *'byung phran lnga*). The outer elements. The impure “residues” of the five great elements; they arise externally as space, water, earth, fire, and air due to grasping and reification of the five lights of the great elements. See CM 398, BM 327–29, GD 150–53, VE 123–25.

elements, five great (Tib. *'byung ba chen po lnga*). The inner elements. The pure quintessences of space, water, earth, fire, and air, which arise as the play of absolute space in the five primary colors of white, blue, yellow, red, and green. They manifest as the outer luster of the five lights due to obscuration of the inner glow of the five facets of primordial consciousness. See CM 398, BM 327–29, GD 150–53, VE 123–25.

embodiment, enlightened. See *kāya*.

emergence, spirit of (Tib. *nges 'byung gi blo*, Skt. *niḥsaraṇa*). The aspiration to emerge from saṃsāra (renunciation) and experience the complete freedom of suffering and its causes in the realization of nirvāṇa. See FP 14–15, VE 402–3.

empowerments, four (Tib. *dbang bzhi*, Skt. *caturabhiṣeka*). (1) The vase, or water, empowerment, (2) the secret, or crown, empowerment, (3) the wisdom–primordial-consciousness, or vajra, empowerment, and (4) the word, or bell, empowerment. To take the four empowerments, visualize that (1) from a white Om̐ at your guru’s crown, white light rays descend to the point between your eyebrows, purifying physical obscurations with the vase empowerment; (2) from a red Āḥ at your guru’s throat, red light rays descend to your throat, purifying verbal obscurations with the secret empowerment; (3) from a dark blue Hūṃ at your guru’s heart, dark blue light rays descend to your heart, purifying mental obscurations with the wisdom–primordial-consciousness empowerment; and (4) from a red Hrīḥ at your guru’s navel, red light rays descend to your navel, purifying the obscuration of grasping at the three doors as different with the fourth, or word, empowerment. See also Padmasambhava, *Natural Liberation: Padmasambhava’s Teachings on the Six Bardos*, commentary by Gyatrul

Rinpoche, trans. B. Alan Wallace (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008), 78–79. See GD 255–57, 271; VE 248–9.

emptiness (Tib. *stong pa nyid*, Skt. *śūnyatā*). The absence of the true, inherent existence of all phenomena. Emptiness itself is not to be reified.

energy-mind (Tib. *rlung sems*). The combination of vital energy, likened to a blind, wild horse, and the mind, likened to a crippled rider. See GD 150, VE 45.

enjoyments, seven (Tib. *nyer spyod bdun*). The seven offerings of water for drinking, water for bathing the feet, flowers, incense, light, perfume, and food.

enlightened view (Tib. *dgongs*). This is the honorific form of *bsam pa*, which means “thought” or “intention.” However, according to Gangteng Tulku Rinpoché, in the context of these teachings it is the honorific form of *lta ba*, which means “view” or “perspective.”

enlightenment (Tib. *byang chub*, Skt. *bodhi*). Spiritual awakening.

ethically neutral (Tib. *lung ma bstan*, Skt. *avyākṛta*). Characteristic of all phenomena that are not by nature either virtuous or nonvirtuous.

etymology, contextual (Tib. *nges tshig*, Skt. *nirukti*). A definition given by the semantic roots of terms.

experience, meditative (Tib. *nyams*). Transient, anomalous psychological and/or somatic experience triggered by authentic meditative practice. The normal response to such experiences is to reify them, in which case they may become chronic problems. To allow them to self-release, one must simply be discerningly present with them, without reifying them or grasping to their inherent existence as “I” or “mine.”

experience, visionary (Tib. *nyams snang*). The four visions of direct crossing over practice.

extinction into ultimate reality (Tib. *chos nyid zad pa*). The fourth and final vision on the path of direct crossing over, in which all phenomena dissolve

into the space of awareness. This corresponds to the attainment of the supreme ground of a spontaneously actualized vidyādhara on the mantra path, which surpasses the tenth āryabodhisattva ground, known as the Cloud of Dharma.

extremes of conceptual elaboration, eight (Tib. *spros pa'i mtha'a brgyad*, Skt. *aṣṭānta*). The eight philosophical assertions of origination, cessation, existence, nonexistence, coming, going, diversity, and unity.

fields, ten (Tib. *zhing bcu*). Those who engage in (1) destroying the teaching, (2) despising the Three Jewels, (3) robbing the possessions of the Saṅgha, (4) abusing the Mahāyāna, (5) threatening the bodies of gurus, (6) holding vajra siblings and friends in contempt, (7) creating obstacles to spiritual practice, (8) being utterly devoid of mercy and compassion, (9) lacking samayas and vows, and (10) holding false views concerning actions and their ethical consequences.

form realm (Tib. *gzugs khams*, Skt. *rūpadhātu*). The seventeen domains of the form realm, which are spontaneously actualized by afflictive mentation, include the domains of Brahmā's Assembly, the Priests of Brahmā, and Great Brahmā in the first dhyāna; Lesser Radiance, Immeasurable Radiance, and Clear Radiance in the second dhyāna; Lesser Virtue, Immeasurable Virtue, and Most Extensive Virtue in the third dhyāna; Cloudless, Increasing Merit, and Great Fruition in the fourth dhyāna; and the five pure heavens: the Slightest, the Painless, Perfect Appearance, Extreme Vision, and Akaniṣṭha.

formless realm (Tib. *gzugs med kyi khams*, Skt. *ārūpadhātu*). The four dimensions of the formless realm, which are spontaneously actualized by the substrate, are boundless space, boundless consciousness, nothingness, and neither discernment nor nondiscernment.

freedom from conceptual elaboration (Tib. *spros pa dang bral ba*). The second of the four stages of mahāmudrā meditation.

freedoms, eight (Tib. *rnam thar brgyad*, Skt. *aṣṭauvimokṣa*). (1) Not viewing that which has form as form, (2) recognizing the absence of inner form and not viewing outer forms, (3) not viewing the sense base of boundless space, (4) not viewing the sense base of boundless consciousness, (5) not viewing

the sense base of nothingness, (6) not viewing the sense base of neither discernment nor nondiscernment, (7) not viewing the pleasantness of the dispersal of obscurations, and (8) not viewing the cessation of discernments and feelings.

gab (Tib. *sgab*). A demon who works in stealth.

galaxy (Tib. *stong gsum gyi 'jig rten*). Lit. “three-thousandfold worlds,” meaning one thousand to the third power, or one billion worlds; each has a Mount Meru and four continents. There are said to be a countless number of these throughout the vastness of space.

gaṇacakra (Skt., Tib. *tshogs 'khor*). Ritual offerings to the awakened beings. See VE 250–64.

gandharva (Skt., Tib. *dri za*). An ethereal being who is said to subsist on fragrances. A “celestial musician.” A being in the bardo.

gandharvas, city of (Tib. *dri za'i grong khyer*, Skt. *gandharvanagara*). An apparitional city of ethereal beings appearing by the power of samādhi in conjunction with the presence of a nearby vessel and moisture.

garuḍa (Skt., Tib. *bya khyung, mkha' lding*). The mythical king of birds, like a great eagle.

gateways of spontaneous actualization, eight (Tib. *lhun grub sgo brgyad*). The gateways of compassion, the lights, the kāyas, the facets of primordial consciousness, nonduality, freedom from extremes, the impurity of saṃsāra, and the purity of nirvāṇa. See GD 253–54.

generic emblem (Tib. *zad pa*, Skt. *kṛtsna*, Pāli *kasiṇa*). Symbolic representations of the five elements and other phenomena, which are used as meditative objects in the cultivation of quiescence.

Ghanavyūha (Skt., Tib. *stug po bkod pa*). Lit. “Compact Display,” this is the buddhafiield of Vairocana in the central direction. See VE 192.

glow, inner (Tib. *mdangs*). The natural glow (*rang mdangs*) of awareness, which is transcendently present in the ground, expresses itself as self-emergent,

innate primordial consciousness. When this is obscured by ignorance, its radiance is transformed into subtle grasping, afflictive mentation, mentation, and the external display of the elements and aggregates of saṃsāra. See SV 618; VS 533–34, 555–56; CM 326–29; GD 151–56; VE 122–27.

goals, two (Tib. *don gnyis*). The goals for oneself and the goals for others.

graha (Skt., Tib. *gdon*). A malevolent, demonic being that torments one in lifetime after lifetime.

Great Perfection (Tib. *rdzogs pa chen po*, Skt. *mahāsandhi*). Dzokchen, or *atiyoga*, the pinnacle of the nine vehicles transmitted by the Nyingma school. The clear-light absolute space of phenomena, having no center or periphery, from which all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa spontaneously arise as creative displays. See VE 301–11.

ground, primordial (Tib. *ye gzhi*). The originally pure ground of being. The absolute space of phenomena. Pristine awareness. The sugatagarbha. Samantabhadra, who is of the nature of the five kāyas, the five buddha families, the five facets of primordial consciousness, and the five ḍākinīs. See GD 142–43, CM 382–86.

ground, universal (Tib. *spyi gzhi*). Emptiness, as the foundation for the whole of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

ground consciousness (Tib. *gzhi'i shes pa*, Skt. *āśrayajñāna*). The unceasing stream of consciousness that goes from one life to another and finally to the state of enlightenment, so it may become virtuous or nonvirtuous. Only when its essential nature becomes manifest is it seen to be of the nature of unstructured awareness. It is identical to the substrate consciousness. See VE 109–10.

ground of being (Tib. *gzhi*, Skt. *āśraya*). The ground of the whole of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. The unaware aspect of the ground is the *substrate*, and its enlightened aspect is the *dharmakāya*. See CM 377–78, MF 486.

ground pristine awareness (Tib. *gzhi'i rig pa*, Skt. *āśrayavidyā*). The primordial nature of the mind, which is beyond the three times and all conceptual

elaborations, and knows the nature of the ground of being. See BM 354; GD 142–43, 326–27; VE 109–10, 116–21.

grounds and paths (Tib. *sa lam*, Skt. *bhūmimārga*). The stages of attainment and the paths that lead to them. There are five sequential paths culminating in the liberation of a śrāvaka, five culminating in the liberation of a pratyekabuddha, and five bodhisattva paths culminating in the perfect enlightenment of a buddha. According to the sūtra tradition, there are ten āryabodhisattva grounds. According to the Great Perfection tradition, there are twenty āryabodhisattva grounds, followed by the culmination of the twenty-first ground.

guardian (Tib. *mgon po*, Skt. *nātha*). A powerful protector, who may be a sentient being.

guardian, directional (Tib. *phyogs skyong*, Skt. *dikpāla*). A powerful being that guards one of the ten directions.

guardian of the remains (Tib. *lhag skyong*). A being to which the remains of the gaṇḍacakra are offered.

guardian of the teachings (Tib. *bka' srung*). General guardian of the Buddha's Dharma.

gyuk (Tib. *rgyug*). A village spirit.

hāriṇī (Skt., Tib. *'phrog ma*). A malevolent demonic being that steals one's collections of merit and knowledge.

haughty gods and demons, eight classes of (Tib. *dregs pa'i lha srin sde brgyad*, Skt. *aṣṭasenā*). Devas, nāgas, yakṣas, asuras, gandharvas, garuḍas, kiṃnaras, and mahorāgas.

Hīnayāna (Skt., Tib. *theg pa dman pa*). Lit. the “inferior vehicle” of Buddhist theory and practice, aimed at one's own liberation. This includes the Śrāvakayāna and the Pratyekabuddhayāna.

hollow crystal kati channel (Tib. *ka ti shel gyi sbu gu can*). Among the three lamps of the vessel, this quintessence of the channels is one-eighth the width

of a horsehair, with two branches that stem from inside the heart, curve around the back of the ears, and come to the pupils of the eyes. See CM 423, 427; VE 424, 427.

identity, personal (Tib. *gang zag gi bdag*, Skt. *pudgalātmya*). An intrinsically existent self, which is actually nonexistent but which is grasped as real by the deluded mind.

identity, phenomenal (Tib. *chos kyi bdag*, Skt. *dharmātmya*). An intrinsically existent identity of a phenomenon other than the self, which is actually nonexistent but which is grasped as real by the deluded mind.

identitylessness (Tib. *bdag med*, Skt. *nairātmya*). The selflessness or lack of inherent identity of phenomena. There are two types: (1) the identitylessness of persons and (2) the identitylessness of phenomena.

immeasurables, four (Tib. *tshad med bzhi*, Skt. *caturapramāṇa*). Loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity.

inner preliminaries, seven (Tib. *nang gi sngon 'gro bdun*). (1) Taking refuge, (2) cultivating bodhicitta, (3) offering the maṇḍala, (4) practicing the purificatory meditation and mantra of Vajrasattva, (5) guru yoga, (6) transference of consciousness, and (7) severance of māras.

insight (Tib. *lhag mthong*, Skt. *vipaśyanā*). Contemplative insight into the nature of phenomena.

instruction, pith (Tib. *man ngag*, Skt. *upadeśa*). A succinct and powerful practical instruction, coming from the experience of the guru and the lineage.

instruction, pointing-out (Tib. *mdzub khrid*, *ngo sprod pa*). An introduction to the nature of the mind.

instruction, practical (Tib. *gdams ngag*, Skt. *avavāda*). Lit. “oral instruction,” quintessential guidance in spiritual practice, which synthesizes the teachings of the buddhas into specific practices for specific individuals, according to their needs.

intermediate period (Tib. *bar do*, Skt. *antarabhāva*). The interval between death

and one's next rebirth, which includes two of the six transitional phases, namely the transitional phase of ultimate reality and the transitional phase of becoming.

intermediate teachings (Tib. *bka' bar pa*). The Buddha's second turning of the wheel of Dharma.

introspection (Tib. *shes bzhin*, Skt. *saṃprajanya*). The mental process by which one monitors one's own body and mind. In the practice of śamatha, its principal function is to note the occurrence of laxity and excitation.

Jewels, Three (Tib. *dkon mchog gsum*, Skt. *trīratna*). The outer objects of refuge, which are the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha.

jina (Skt., Tib. *rgyal ba*). Lit. a "victorious one" who has conquered cognitive and afflictive obscurations; an epithet of a buddha.

jinaputra (Skt., Tib. *rgyal ba'i sras*). Lit. "son of the victorious ones," an epithet of a bodhisattva.

jñānasattva (Skt., Tib. *ye shes sems dpa'*). A "primordial consciousness being," whom one invites and with whom one merges inseparably in the practice of the stage of generation. See VE 149.

karma (Skt., Tib. *las*). Actions defiled by mental afflictions, especially the delusion of self-grasping.

Karmaprasiddhi (Skt., Tib. *las rab rdzogs pa*). Lit. "Perfection of Excellent Deeds," this is the buddhafiield of Amoghasiddhi in the northern direction.

karmic energy (Tib. *las rlung*). A vital energy that courses through the body and is propelled by one's previous karma.

karmic momentum (Tib. *las 'phro*). The carryover into this life of one's karma from previous lifetimes.

kartṭṛkā (Skt., Tib. *gri gug*). A curved, hooked knife used for flaying hides.

katika (Skt.). A species of bird.

kāya (Skt., Tib. *sku*). An aggregate of spontaneously actualized facets of primordial consciousness and qualities of enlightenment, designated as a composite body.

kāyas, *five* (Tib. *sku lnga*, Skt. *pañcakāya*). The dharmakāya, saṃbhogakāya, nirmāṇakāya, svabhāvikakāya, and vajrakāya, which are naturally present in the ground sugatagarbha.

khaṭvāṅga (Skt., Tib. *kha twam ga*). A ritual staff that is commonly topped with three skulls in varying degrees of freshness.

kīla (Skt., Tib. *phur ba*). A three-edged ritual dagger that may be used as an object of devotions, such as prostrations, offerings, and circumambulations.

kiṃnara (Skt., Tib. *mi 'am ci*). Lit. “man or what?” — a human-bird chimera. One of the eight classes of haughty gods and demons.

kritipa (Skt.). A species of bird having the form of a golden vajra.

Kriyāyāna (Skt., Tib. *kri ya'i theg pa*). The spiritual vehicle of the “action tantras,” which is practiced by not confounding one’s pure Vajrayāna behavior with ordinary, impure conduct.

kṣamāpati (Skt., Tib. *sa bdag*). An earth spirit, whose actual nature is that of delusions produced by the causes and conditions of ignorance.

kṣatriya (Skt., Tib. *rgyal rigs*). A member of the Vedic royal caste.

kumbhāṇḍa (Skt., Tib. *grul bum*). A type of yakṣa.

lalanā (Skt., Tib. *rkyang ma*). The left channel among the three principal channels that run vertically through the torso and up into the head.

lamp, fluid distant lasso (Tib. *rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*). In direct crossing over terminology, this is the lamp of the eyes, which are fluid and are able to apprehend distant objects, as if they were caught with a lasso. This lamp is like the flower of a tree whose root is the citta lamp of the flesh and whose trunk is the hollow crystal kati channel. The term *fluid distant lasso lamp* is collectively given to all three, which are known as the *three lamps of the*

vessel. See CM 423–24, VE 424–25.

lamp of empty bindus (Tib. *thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*). The appearance of the five quintessences in luminous spheres or bindus. See CM 426–27, VE 427, VS 591.

lamp of self-emergent wisdom (Tib. *shes rab rang byung gi sgron ma*). One's own awareness, the sugatagarbha, which witnesses the displays of primordial consciousness. See CM 427–28, VS 591, VE 427–28.

lamp of the flesh, citta (Tib. *tsitta sha'i sgron ma*). The “fleshy citta lamp,” located at the heart. See CM 423, VE 424.

lamp of the pristine space of awareness (Tib. *dbyings rnam par dag pa'i sgron ma*). The pristine expanse of the sole bindu inside the citta lamp of the flesh, which is the space of awareness, in which the bindus and vajra strands appear. See CM 424–26, VS 591, VE 425–27.

lamps, six (Tib. *sgron me drug*). The teachings on direct crossing over describe six metaphoric “lamps,” whose nature is luminosity: the three lamps of the vessel (the citta lamp of the flesh, the hollow crystal kati channel, and the fluid lasso lamp) and the three lamps of the vital essence (the lamp of the pristine space of awareness, the lamp of empty bindus, and the lamp of self-emergent wisdom). See CM 423–28, VS 591, VE 424–28.

latticework and pendants (Tib. *drva ba drva phyed*). Indian temple frieze ornamentation featuring a lattice (i.e., web or net) of looped garlands with pendants hung from the highest points.

liberation, natural (Tib. *rang grol*). Lit. “self-liberation” or “self-release,” this may also be translated as “release itself” or “natural release.” When there is no grasping, thoughts and afflictions are naturally liberated without any need for antidotes, interventions, or outside forces. This is like the knots in a snake unraveling themselves. See GD 294.

liberation, practice of (Tib. *bsgral las*). The wrathful activity of taking a being's life and delivering that being to a higher state of existence.

liberation into the expanse (Tib. *klong grol*). A natural state of liberation in

which the emergence of appearances becomes simultaneous with their release, like lightning flashing from the sky and vanishing back into the sky. See VE 41.

Lineage of Ordinary Individuals, Aural (Tib. *gang zag snyan khung gi brgyud pa*). The lineage in which the practical instructions naturally arise in verbal transmission as an entrance to the disciples' paths, like filling a vase. See VE 2, GD 280.

Lineage of the Buddhas, Enlightened View (Tib. *rgyal ba dgongs pa'i brgyud*). The term *dgongs pa* is the honorific form of *bsam pa*, which means "thought" or "intention." However, according to Gangteng Tulku Rinpoché, in the context of these teachings it is the honorific form of *lta ba*, which means "perspective" or "view." The lineage is so designated because the enlightened view of all the buddhas of the three times is of one taste in the absolute space of phenomena. See VE 2, GD 279.

Lineage of the Vidyādhara, Symbolic (Tib. *rig 'dzin brda yi brgyud*). The lineage of the Great Perfection, by which the symbolic signs of ultimate reality, the treasury of space, are spontaneously released, without reliance upon the stages of spiritual training and practice. See VE 2, GD 279.

Madhyamaka (Skt., Tib. *dbu ma*). The Middle Way, the higher of the two Mahāyāna schools in the sūtra system.

Mādhyamika (Skt., Tib. *dbu ma pa*). A follower of the school of Madhyamaka.

mahāmudrā (Skt., Tib. *phyag rgya chen po*). The "great seal," which is a synonym for emptiness, the absolute space of phenomena.

mahāsiddha (Skt., Tib. *sgrub chen*). A "great adept," who has accomplished mundane and supermundane abilities and realizations.

Mahāyāna (Skt., Tib. *theg pa chen po*). The "Great Vehicle," by which one proceeds to the state of the perfect enlightenment of a buddha.

Mahāyogayāna (Skt., Tib. *ma hā yo ga'i theg pa*). The spiritual vehicle of the "Great Yoga," which is perfected by realizing the nondual reality of the deity and one's own appearances.

maṇḍala (Skt., Tib. *dkyil 'khor*). A symbolic representation of the world, which is ritually offered; a representation of the pure abode of a deity.

mantra (Skt., Tib. *sngags*). Sanskrit syllables imbued with special symbolic significance or spiritual blessings.

māra (Skt., Tib. *bdud*). A demonic force that manifests as grasping involving hopes and fears.

matraṃ (Skt.). The designation of matricide for the rūdra (of self-concepts) because he devours (obscures) his mother (the sugatagarbha). See CM 403, GD 276.

māṭṛkā (Skt., Tib. *ma mo*). A being who takes on all kinds of forms and is an embodiment of disturbing attachments.

matta (Skt., Tib. *dregs pa*). A spirit belonging to an eightfold class of haughty gods and demons.

meaning, definitive (Tib. *nges don*, Skt. *nītārtha*). The meaning of ultimate reality.

meaning, provisional (Tib. *drang don*, Skt. *neyārtha*). The symbolic, relative, or contextual meaning, as opposed to the definitive, ultimate, or absolute meaning.

meditative absorption (Tib. *snnyoms 'jug*, Skt. *samāpatti*). One of eight attainments in the form and formless realms corresponding to the dhyānas.

meditative concentration. See *samādhi*.

meditative equipoise (Tib. *mnyam bzhaḡ*, Skt. *samāhita*). Undistracted, even placement of the mind upon its object for as long as one wishes, culminating in the achievement of śamatha.

mental process (Tib. *sems byung*, Skt. *caitta*). A mental process that arises in conjunction with consciousness, by means of which one engages in various ways with the objects of apprehension.

mentation (Tib. *yid*, Skt. *manas*). A mental function of every sentient being that serves as the basis for the emergence of all discursive thoughts, and which transforms thoughts into the objects of all appearances.

mentation, afflictive (Tib. *nyon yid*, Skt. *kliṣṭāmanas*). One of the eight aggregates of consciousness, manifesting as a primal grasping to the self as a subject. The natural potency of the darkness of ignorance and delusion.

mind (Tib. *sems*, Skt. *citta*). Dualistic awareness that clings to appearances, conceptually observes its own processes, and arouses pleasure and pain through intellectual fabrications and the acceptance and rejection of virtue and vice.

mind, ultimate nature of (Tib. *sems nyid*, Skt. *cittatā*). Pristine awareness, the sugatagarbha.

mindfulness (Tib. *dran pa*, Skt. *smṛti*). The mental faculty of attending continuously, without forgetfulness, to an object with which one is already familiar.

mindfulness, enmeshed (Tib. *'jur bu'i dran pa*). The state of maintaining mindfulness of the steady, vivid manifestation of thoughts without responding to them with hope, fear, joy, or sorrow.

mindfulness, four kinds of (Tib. *dran pa rnam pa bzhi*). Single-pointed mindfulness, manifest mindfulness, the absence of mindfulness of the substrate, and the self-illuminating mindfulness of the substrate consciousness. See CM 354, VS 522–23, VE 40–42.

mindfulness, manifest (Tib. *mngon du gyur pa'i dran pa*). The natural power of mindfulness occurring without strenuously observing the mind's stillness and movement.

mindfulness, naturally settled (Tib. *rang babs kyi dran pa*). The state of awareness in which consciousness mindfully comes to rest in its own state; with little clinging to experiences, the mind settles into its own natural state, free of modification.

mindfulness, self-illuminating (Tib. *rang gsal gyi dran pa*). Once coarse

mindfulness has subsided, resting in a luminous vacuity, or the substrate consciousness.

mindfulness, self-liberated (Tib. *rang grol gyi dran pa*). See *mindfulness, manifest*.

mindfulness, single-pointed (Tib. *rtse gcig gi dran pa*). Vivid mindfulness resulting from the unification of the mind's stillness and movement; this is called *vipaśyanā*.

miraculous power (Tib. *rdzu 'phrul*, Skt. *ṛddhi*). A miraculous display made for the sake of others by one who has accomplished such power through meditation.

miraculous power, four bases of (Tib. *rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa bzhi*, Skt. *catvāro ṛddhipādāḥ*). The *saṃādhis* of aspiration (Tib. *'dun pa*), enthusiasm (Tib. *brtson 'grus*), intention (Tib. *sems pa*), and analysis (Tib. *dpyod pa*).

mode of existence (Tib. *gnas tshul*). How things actually are, in contrast with their modes of appearance (Tib. *snang tshul*).

modifications, three (Tib. *bcos pa rnam gsum*). Modification of one's body, speech, and mind.

mudrā (Skt., Tib. *phyag rgya*). A seal or imprint, such as a ruler's insignia on a decree. A gesture symbolizing some form of enlightened activity. In tantra, the female consort of a male deity.

mundane concerns, eight (Tib. *'jig rten chos brgyad*). Material gain and loss, pleasure and pain, praise and ridicule, and good and bad reputation.

mundane existence (Tib. *srid pa*, Skt. *bhava*). The cycle of existence in which one is propelled from life to life by the force of one's mental afflictions and karma.

nāda (Skt.). The subtlest aspect of sound, represented by the curved line above such Tibetan and Sanskrit syllables as *Hūṃ* and *Om*.

nāga (Skt., Tib. *klu*). A serpent-like creature whose actual nature is that of

delusions produced by the causes and conditions of ignorance. Such beings may be called into the service of the Dharma.

nāgas, eight great (Tib. *klu chen po brgyad*). Ananta, Takṣaka, Atibala, Kulika, Vāsuki, Śaṅkhapāla, Padma, and Varuṇa.

nature (Tib. *rang bzhin*, Skt. *prakṛti*). The quality or feature of some phenomenon, such as the mind, whose nature is luminosity.

nature, essential (Tib. *ngo bo*, Skt. *svabhāva*). The fundamental nature of a phenomenon, as in the case of awareness being the essential nature of the mind. Emptiness, as the essential nature of mind.

nature of being (Tib. *yin lugs*). The “way it is,” synonymous with *nature of existence*.

nature of existence (Tib. *gnas lugs*, Skt. *tathātva*). The fundamental mode of existence of all phenomena, emptiness, which is the basis of liberation. This contrasts with the way things appear (Tib. *snang lugs*), which is the basis of delusion.

natures, five essential (Tib. *ngo bo lnga*). The five facets of primordial consciousness.

nihilism (Tib. *med par lta ba*). A doctrine that denies the possibility of authentic knowledge, meaning, values, or morality.

nirmāṇakāya (Skt., Tib. *sprul pa'i sku*). An “emanation embodiment” of the sugatagarbha that may appear anywhere in the universe in order to benefit sentient beings, with four types: living-being, teacher, created, and material nirmāṇakāyas. See VE 186–88.

nirvāṇa (Skt., Tib. *mya ngan las 'das pa*). Spiritual liberation, in which one is forever freed from suffering caused by delusion and all other mental afflictions.

nyen (Tib. *gnyan*). A subclass of kṣamāpati. These beings are thought to harm people who create disturbances in the earth or bodies of water or who cut down trees. Nāgas are a subclass of nyen.

obscurations, afflictive (Tib. *nyon mongs pa'i sgrib pa*, Skt. *kleśāvaraṇa*). The coarse obscurations that are abandoned on the path of seeing the nature of reality.

obscurations, cognitive (Tib. *shes bya'i sgrib pa*, Skt. *jñeyāvaraṇa*). The subtle mental obscurations, specifically the habitual propensities of mental afflictions and the appearances of inherent existence, which impede the achievement of omniscience.

obscurations, two (Tib. *sgrib pa gnyis*, Skt. *āvaraṇa dvitidhaḥ*). The afflictive and cognitive obscurations, which prevent one from seeing the nature of reality and from achieving the omniscience of a buddha, respectively.

occasions, four (Tib. *dus bzhi*). Pre-dawn, early morning, noon, and dusk.

offerings, three sweet (Tib. *mngar gsum*). White sugar, molasses, and honey.

offerings, three white (Tib. *dkar gsum*). Milk, curd, and butter.

one taste (Tib. *ro gcig*, Skt. *ekarasa*). The third of the four stages of mahāmudrā meditation. The empty nature of all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa: equally nonexistent, equally pure, naturally arising from the expanse of the ground, and not established as anything else. See GD 146, VE 353.

pacification of suffering (Tib. *sdug bsngal zhi byed*). A system of practice introduced into Tibet in the twelfth century by the Indian bodhisattva Padampa Sangyé.

palace, immeasurable (celestial) (Tib. *gzhal yas khang*, Skt. *vimāna*). The “conceptually immeasurable abode” of a deity.

parinirvāṇa (Skt., Tib. *yongs su myang ngan las 'das pa*). The complete enlightenment of a buddha, manifesting outwardly as death.

pārthiva (Skt., Tib. *rgyal po*). A demonic force or being that emerges from the aggregates of grasping at the “I” and consists of the conceptual mental factors that reify appearances, arising as an apparition of ignorance.

path, referential (Tib. *dmigs bcas kyi lam*) The stage of generation entailing

objects that are grasped with the mind as if they existed by their own characteristics. Within the Vajrayāna, this is taught as the path of definite perfection and the path of the power of the view. *See* VE 199.

path of definite perfection (Tib. *lam nges rdzogs*). Within the Vajrayāna, the path that reveals the deities and buddhafiels as definitely existing by their own characteristics, and which emphasizes only the avenue of relative skillful means. *See* VE 199.

path of the power of the view (Tib. *lta ba gyad kyi lam*). Within the Vajrayāna, the method by which one achieves stability in one's own pristine awareness, whereby ordinary appearances and clinging are transferred to the nature of buddhafiels, and one's body, speech, and mind are transferred to the dwelling of the three vajras. *See* VE 199–278.

perception, extrasensory (Tib. *mngon par shes pa*, Skt. *abhijñā*). Exceptional modes of perception that arise along the path to enlightenment.

perfections, six (Tib. *pha rol tu phyin pa drug*, Skt. *saṭpāramitā*). Generosity, ethical discipline, patience, enthusiasm, meditation, and wisdom. *See* VS 525, FP 7–8.

perfections, ten (Tib. *pha rol tu phyin pa bcu*, Skt. *daśapāramitā*). The six perfections plus skillful means (Tib. *thabs*, Skt. *upāya*), aspirational prayer (Tib. *smon lam*, Skt. *praṇidhāna*), power (Tib. *stobs*, Skt. *bala*), and primordial consciousness (Tib. *ye shes*, Skt. *jñāna*).

perfections of the saṃbhogakāya, five (Tib. *phun sum tshogs pa lnga*). The perfect time, place, teacher, retinue, and Dharma, or teaching. Also called five fully endowed circumstances, excellences, or certainties.

philosophical stance (Tib. *spros pa'i mtha'*). Conceptual constructs, such as those of existence and nonexistence, which are apprehended by way of dualistic grasping.

phlegm (Tib. *bad kan*, Skt. *kapha*). In the Āyurvedic and Tibetan medical systems, the bodily constituent, or humor, that maintains structural integrity and lubricates.

piśācī (Skt., Tib. *phra men, sha za*). One of eight flesh-eating protector deities with a bird's head and a woman's body or with a carnivorous animal's head and a man's body. See GD 187, VE 261.

planets, eight great (Tib. *gza' chen po brgyad*). Venus, Jupiter, the Moon, Mercury, Mars, Rāhula, the Sun, and Saturn.

poisons, five (Tib. *dug lnga*). Delusion, hatred, pride, attachment, and envy.

potencies, eight (Tib. *nus pa*). Heavy, oily, mild, sharp, light, rough, hot, and cool.

pratyekabuddha (Skt., Tib. *rang sangs rgyas*). Lit. "solitary buddha," a person who is committed to his own individual liberation by solitary practice.

Pratyekabuddhayāna (Skt., Tib. *rang sangs rgyas kyi theg pa*). The spiritual vehicle of a pratyekabuddha, which is perfected by realizing the nature of all appearances and mindsets of the three realms as dependently related events and as the twelve links of dependent origination.

precious substances, seven (Tib. *rin po che sna bdun*). Ruby, sapphire, lapis lazuli, emerald, diamond, pearl, and coral. Alternately gold, silver, turquoise, coral, pearl, emerald, and sapphire.

preta (Skt., Tib. *yi dvags*). A spirit whose existence is dominated by insatiable hunger, thirst, and craving.

primordial consciousness (Tib. *ye shes*, Skt. *jñāna*). The manifest state of the ground, which is self-emergent, naturally luminous, and free of outer and inner obscuration; this is indivisible from the all-pervasive, lucid, clear expanse of the absolute space of phenomena, free of contamination.

primordial consciousness, discerning (Tib. *so sor rtog pa'i ye shes*, Skt. *pratyavekṣaṇajñāna*). Primordial consciousness that unimpededly discerns the displays of pristine awareness, which knows reality as it is and perceives the full range of all phenomena; this is purified as Bhagavān Amitābha. When obscured by ignorance, it manifests externally as red light; this is reified as the derivative element of fire. Its radiance is transformed into mentation and gives rise to thoughts of attachment and the aggregate of

recognition. See GD 150–53, VE 121–25.

primordial consciousness, five facets of (Tib. *ye shes lnga*, Skt. *pañcājñānāni*).

Mirror-like primordial consciousness, discerning primordial consciousness, primordial consciousness of equality, primordial consciousness of accomplishment, and primordial consciousness of the absolute space of phenomena.

primordial consciousness, mirror-like (Tib. *me long lta bu'i ye shes*, Skt.

ādarśajñāna). Self-illuminating primordial consciousness, which is of a lucid, clear nature, free of contamination, and allows for the unceasing appearances of all manner of objects; this is purified as Bhagavān Akṣobhya, or as Vajrasattva (GD 155). When obscured by ignorance, it manifests externally as white light; this is reified as the derivative element of water. Its radiance is transformed into the substrate consciousness and gives rise to thoughts of hatred and the aggregate of consciousness. See GD 150–53, VE 121–25.

primordial consciousness, six facets of (Tib. *ye shes drug*, Skt. *pañcājñāna*).

Mirror-like primordial consciousness, discerning primordial consciousness, primordial consciousness of equality, primordial consciousness of accomplishment, primordial consciousness of the absolute space of phenomena, and the primordial consciousness that perceives the full range of phenomena.

primordial consciousness, three facets of (Tib. *ye shes gsum*). Detached, unimpeded primordial consciousness of all phenomena in the past, present, and future.

primordial consciousness, two facets of (Tib. *ye shes gnyis*). Primordial consciousness that knows reality as it is (ontology) and primordial consciousness that perceives the full range of phenomena (phenomenology).

primordial consciousness of accomplishment (Tib. *bya ba sgrub pa'i ye shes*, Skt. *kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*). Primordial consciousness by which all pure, free, simultaneously perfected deeds and activities are accomplished naturally, of their own accord; this is purified as Bhagavān Amoghasiddhi. When obscured by ignorance, it manifests externally as green light; this is reified as

the derivative element of air. Its radiance is transformed into subtle grasping of the five sensory consciousnesses and gives rise to thoughts of envy and the aggregate of compositional factors. See GD 150–53, VE 121–25.

primordial consciousness of equality (Tib. *mnyam pa nyid kyi ye shes*, Skt. *samatājñāna*). Primordial consciousness of the equal purity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa in great emptiness; this is purified as Bhagavān Ratnasambhava. When obscured by ignorance, it manifests externally as yellow light; this is reified as the derivative element of earth. Its radiance is transformed into afflictive mentation and gives rise to thoughts of pride and the aggregate of feeling. See GD 150–53, VE 121–25.

primordial consciousness of the absolute space of phenomena (Tib. *chos kyi dbyings kyi ye shes*, Skt. *dharmadhātujñāna*). The self-emergent essential nature of the pure ground, which is primordial great emptiness, and which subsumes all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa; this is purified as Bhagavān Vairocana. When obscured by ignorance, it manifests externally as indigo light; this is reified as the derivative element of space. Its radiance is transformed into the substrate and gives rise to thoughts of delusion and the aggregate of form. See GD 150–53, VE 121–25.

primordial consciousness that knows reality as it is (Tib. *ji lta ba mkhyen pa'i ye shes*, Skt. *yathāvadbhāvikajñāna*). The ontological aspect of primordial consciousness, which correctly knows the nature of ultimate reality, the sugatagarbha; this corresponds to knowing the essential nature of pristine awareness.

primordial consciousness that perceives the full range of phenomena (Tib. *rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye shes, ji snyad mkhyen pa'i ye shes*, Skt. *yāvadbhāvikajñāna*). The phenomenological aspect of primordial consciousness — omniscience; this perceives all the manifestations of the natural radiance of pristine awareness.

pristine awareness (Tib. *rig pa*, Skt. *vidyā*). The eye of great, all-pervasive wisdom that comprehends saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as being totally subsumed within great enlightenment, which entails natural liberation in the absolute space of the ground — the great purity and equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. See GD 326.

pristine awareness that is present in the ground (Tib. *gzhir gnas kyi rig pa*). The all-pervasive, fundamental nature of awareness, which is equivalent to the dharmakāya.

progress in meditative experience (Tib. *nyams snang gong 'phel ba*). The second of the four stages on the path of direct crossing over, in which all appearances during and after meditation transform into displays of light and rainbow bindus with ever-increasing clarity, until finally all ordinary appearances vanish and dissolve into continuous, omnipresent displays of visions of light. This stage corresponds to the attainment of the fifth āryabodhisattva stage, known as Difficult to Cultivate.

propensities, habitual (Tib. *bag chags*, Skt. *vāsanā*). Mental imprints accumulated as a result of previous experiences or actions, which influence later events and conduct.

protector, worldly (Tib. *'jig rten skyong*, Skt. *lokapāla*). Unenlightened beings who are oath-bound, usually by Padmasambhava or another adept, to protect the Dharma.

pure vision (Tib. *dag snang*). A teaching received by an accomplished master in a visionary experience or dream as a blessing from a wisdom being such as a deity, siddha, or ḍākinī.

qualities of water, eight (Tib. *chu'i yon tan brgyad, yan lag brgyad*). Cool, sweet, soothing, light, clear, pure, not harmful to the throat, and beneficial to the stomach.

quintessence (Tib. *dvangs ma*). The pristine essence of a phenomenon, as contrasted with its impure portion, derivative, residue, or dregs (Tib. *snyigs ma*, Skt. *kaṣāya*). See VE 129, 424–5.

quintessences, five (Tib. *dvangs ma lnga*). The quintessences of the five facets of primordial consciousness.

radiance (Tib. *gdangs*). The veiling effects of obscurations that cause the five facets of primordial consciousness to appear as the five poisons, the five aggregates, and the five elements.

rainbow body, great (Tib. 'ja' lus 'pho ba chen po). This is the highest achievement of the rainbow body, in which one becomes enveloped in light and disappears into the nature of light, or else one is encompassed by a shroud of light that covers the sky with rainbows and clouds, and then disappears into rainbow colors.

rainbow body, small (Tib. 'ja' lus chung ngu). This level of rainbow body occurs after one's body and mind have separated and one dissolves into the nature of rainbows and light without leaving behind any trace of one's aggregates.

rainbow body, small transference (Tib. 'pho ba chung ngu'i 'ja' lus). This occurs within seven days after the clear light of death arises, when the material elements of the body become smaller and smaller, until finally the material body dissolves into elementary particles, such that only the residues of one's hair and nails remain.

rākṣasa (Skt., Tib. *srin po*). A wrathful emanation of good thoughts induced by ego-grasping.

rakta (Skt.). The element of blood, which symbolizes the wisdom of great emptiness.

ransom torma (Tib. *glud gtor*). A ritual offering made to beings to persuade them not to interfere with one's spiritual practice.

rasanā (Skt., Tib. *ro ma*). The right channel among the three principal channels that run vertically through the torso and up into the head.

reaching consummate awareness (Tib. *rig pa tshad phebs*). The third of the four stages on the path of direct crossing over, in which the entire universe appears to be totally pervaded with rainbow light and blazing fire, and everything appears as bindus in which the five families of male and female peaceful and wrathful deities appear in union. This stage of spontaneous manifestation corresponds to the attainment of the eighth āryabodhisattva stage, known as Immovable.

reality, ultimate (Tib. *chos nyid*, Skt. *dharmatā*). The ultimate nature of all phenomena, which is emptiness.

realization (Tib. *rtogs pa*). Direct insight into some fundamental aspect of reality. In the context of the Great Perfection, this refers to the subtle, exact knowledge of how all appearing phenomena are nonobjective and empty from their own side, culminating in the decisive knowledge of the one taste of great emptiness — the fact that the whole of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa naturally arises from the expanse of the ground and is not established as anything else.

realms, three (Tib. *kham s gsum*, Skt. *trīdhātu*). The desire, form, and formless realms.

reify (Tib. *bden 'dzin*). Lit. “to grasp at true existence,” attributing independent, inherent existence to that which exists only conventionally by the power of conceptual designation.

Roots, Three (Tib. *rtsa ba gsum*). The inner objects of refuge, which are the guru, the root of blessings; one’s personal deity (Tib. *yi dam*, Skt. *iṣṭadevatā*), the root of siddhis; and the ḍākinīs or the dharmapālas, the roots of enlightened activities.

ṛṣi (Skt., Tib. *drang srong*). An accomplished contemplative.

rūdra (Skt., Tib. *drag po*). A meditator takes birth as a rūdra, a type of demon, by firmly and clearly visualizing himself or herself as a wrathful deity — while having no realization of emptiness and no motivation of compassion. It can also mean the conceptual grasping by which one reifies the distinctions of outer, inner, and secret phenomena.

rūpakāya (Skt., Tib. *gzugs kyi sku*). A form embodiment of an enlightened being, including nirmāṇakāyas and saṃbhogakāyas.

sādhana (Skt., Tib. *sgrub pa*). A matrix of meditative practices designed to purify the mind, accumulate merit, and bring enlightenment.

samādhi (Skt., Tib. *ting nge 'dzin*). Meditative concentration.

samādhi, all-illuminating (Tib. *kun tu snang ba'i ting nge 'dzin*). To actualize the great display of all phenomena included in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa by realizing the mode of being of the ground. See GD 241, VE 214.

samādhi, causal (Tib. *rgyu'i ting nge 'dzin*). Visualization of the seed syllable of pristine awareness as the cause that emanates the nature of all supporting palaces and supported deities. Apparitions involving objects and the clarity of their presence. See GD 242, VE 214–15.

samādhi of suchness (Tib. *de bzhin nyid kyi ting nge 'dzin*, Skt. *tathatā-samādhi*). Meditation on the entire universe dissolving into the space of awareness as illusory apparitions. The actualization of the absolute space of emptiness, ultimate reality, the mode of existence of suchness. See GD 241, VE 213.

samādhis, three (Tib. *ting 'dzin gsum*). The *samādhi* of suchness, the all-illuminating *samādhi*, and the causal *samādhi*. See GD 240–43, VE 213–15.

samādhisattva (Skt., Tib. *ting nge 'dzin sems dpa'*). A seed syllable at the heart of the *jñānasattva*. See GD 264.

Samantabhadra (Skt., Tib. *kun tu bzang po*). Lit. “all good,” with many meanings, depending upon the context: (1) the name of a particular bodhisattva who is one of the eight principal bodhisattva disciples of the Buddha Śākyamuni; (2) a synonym for buddha nature in general; and (3) a synonym for the dharmakāya, in the form of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, from whom, according to the Nyingma tantras, the diverse buddha bodies emanate and from whom the higher tantric lineages arise. As such, Samantabhadra is also the result attained through the Dzokchen practice of cutting through (Tib. *khregs chod*).

śamatha (Tib. *zhi gnas*). An advanced degree of meditative concentration, in which attentional stability and vividness have been developed to the point that one can fully engage in the cultivation of insight.

samaya (Skt., Tib. *dam tshig*). A commitment or vow made to the buddhas as represented by one's vajra guru.

samayasattva (Skt., Tib. *dam tshig sems dpa'*). The *samaya* being, one's visualization of oneself as the deity, which is united with the *jñānasattva* in the practice of mahāyoga. See GD 285, VE 239.

saṃbhogakāya (Skt., Tib. *longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*). The “full enjoyment embodiment” of an enlightened being, which is accessible only to āryabodhisattvas and buddhas.

saṃsāra (Skt., Tib. *'khor ba*). The cycle of existence, perpetuated by compulsively taking rebirth due to the power of one's mental afflictions and karma.

Saṅgha (Tib. *dge 'dun*). The assembly of āryas. More generally, the congregation of Buddhist practitioners.

secret mantra Vajrayāna (Tib. *gsang sngags rdo rje'i theg pa*). The tantric, esoteric teachings.

secrets, three (Tib. *gsang ba gsum*). The body, speech, and mind of a buddha.

self-appearing (Tib. *rang snang*). Appearing from itself, a characteristic of primordial consciousness and of all phenomena. See CM 415, GD 149, VE 134.

self-concept (Tib. *bdag rtog*). One's reified sense of one's own identity.

self-emergent (Tib. *rang byung*). Emerging from itself; the aspect of primordial consciousness that is Ratnaḍākinī. See CM 389, 415; VS 566; GD 143, 227; VE 190.

self-grasping (Tib. *bdag tu 'dzin pa*, Skt. *atmagraha*). Grasping to an inherently existent identity of persons or things.

self-illuminating (Tib. *rang gsal*). The mirror-like aspect of primordial consciousness. A characteristic of the sharp vajra of wisdom, the experience of the spontaneously actualized essential nature. See CM 363, 386.

self-liberated (Tib. *rang grol*). The liberation of pristine awareness perceiving its own essential nature for itself, characteristic of the youthful vase kāya. See GD 149.

serak (Tib. *bse rag*). A type of preta that consumes the vital essence of food and wealth.

severance of māras (Tib. *bdud gcod*). A meditative practice established in Tibet and Bhutan by Padampa Sangyé's main disciple, Machik Lapdrön (1055–1149), in which one imaginatively offers up one's entire being as a means to realizing the empty nature of all phenomena, severing all clinging to the appearances of the three realms, and realizing that all gods and demons are none other than one's own appearances. See GD 126–27, VE 153–60.

siddha (Skt., Tib. *sgrub thob*). One who has accomplished one or more siddhis.

siddhis, eight (Skt., Tib. *dnegos grub*). A supernormal ability or achievement. The supreme siddhi is the perfect enlightenment of a buddha, while the eight common siddhis include: (1) the siddhi of celestial realms, the ability to dwell in celestial realms while still alive; (2) the siddhi of the sword, the ability to overcome any hostile army; (3) the siddhi of medicinal pills, the ability to become invisible by holding blessing pills in your hand; (4) the siddhi of fleet-footedness, by which you can walk around a lake in an instant by wearing boots you have blessed; (5) the vase siddhi, by which you can create a vessel that renders inexhaustible anything you put inside it, food or money for example; (6) the siddhi of yakṣas, the power to make yakṣas your servants; (7) the siddhi of ambrosia (Skt. *amṛta*), which gives you a lifespan as long as the sun and the moon, the strength of an elephant, and the beauty of a lotus, and makes you feel as light as cotton wool whenever you arise from your seat; and (8) the siddhi of the balm of clairvoyance, which, when applied to your eyes, allows you to see things beneath the earth, such as treasures and so on.

sign (Tib. *mtshan ma*, Skt. *nimitta*). An object grasped by the conceptual mind.

signs and symbols of enlightenment (Tib. *mtshan dang dpe byad*). The thirty-two excellent signs and eighty symbols of a supreme nirmāṇakāya buddha.

skull cup (Tib. *thod pa*, Skt. *kapāla*, *bhanda*). A ritual vessel made from the top portion of a human skull.

space (Tib. *dbyings*, Skt. *dhātu*). On the relative level this refers to the space of awareness (Tib. *chos kyi khams*, Skt. *dharmadhātu*), which in its primal manifestation is the substrate (Tib. *kun gzhi*, Skt. *ālaya*). On the ultimate level it refers to the absolute space of phenomena (Tib. *chos kyi dbyings*, Skt.

dharmadhātu), which is synonymous with emptiness.

space of awareness (Tib. *dbyings*, Skt. *dhātu*). The Tibetan term *dbyings* means the relative “space of awareness” when it is not an abbreviation of *chos kyi dbyings*, or the absolute “space of phenomena.” The term *space of awareness* may be regarded as identical to the term *element of phenomena* (Tib. *chos kyi khams*, Skt. *dharmadhātu*), which denotes the range of phenomena that can be perceived by the mind and is one of the eighteen elements (Tib. *khams*, Skt. *dhātu*) commonly cited in Buddhist phenomenology.

space of awareness, five facets of (Tib. *dbyings lnga*, Skt. *pañcadhātu*). The five facets of primordial consciousness.

spiritual mentor (Tib. *dge ba'i bshes gnyen*, Skt. *kalyāṇamitra*). A spiritual teacher who leads one to the state of liberation and spiritual awakening.

spontaneous actualization (Tib. *lhun grub*, Skt. *anābhoga*). The spontaneous emergence of qualities and activities from the dharmakāya, the realization of which is the central aspect of the practice of direct crossing over.

śrāvaka (Skt., Tib. *nyan thos*). Lit. “hearer,” a disciple of the Buddha who is committed to his own individual liberation by following the path set forth by the Buddha.

Śrāvakayāna (Skt., Tib. *nyan thos kyi theg pa*). The spiritual vehicle of the śrāvakas, which is perfected by realizing personal identitylessness.

Śrīmat (Skt., Tib. *dpal dang ldan pa*). Lit. “Endowed with Glory,” the buddhfield of Ratnasambhava in the southern direction.

stage of completion (Tib. *rdzogs rim*, Skt. *saṃpannakrama*). A Vajrayāna system of practice, corresponding to anuyoga, which is based upon the practice of the stage of generation.

stage of generation (Tib. *bskyed rim*, Skt. *utpattikrama*). A Vajrayāna system of practice, corresponding to mahāyoga, in which one’s own body, speech, and mind are regarded as displays of the vajra body, speech, and mind of one’s personal deity. As a result of such practice, one achieves stability in one’s own awareness, ordinary appearances and clinging are transferred to the

nature of buddhafields, and one's body, speech, and mind are transformed into the three vajras.

stūpa (Skt., Tib. *mchod rten*). A reliquary that holds sacred objects, such as the remains of an enlightened being; its form symbolizes the mind of a buddha.

substantial cause (Tib. *nyer len*). A substantial cause of a phenomenon is a prior phenomenon that actually transforms into the subsequent phenomenon that it produces, such as a seed that transforms into a sprout.

substantialism (Tib. *gngos por lta ba*). The view that phenomena exist by their own inherent natures, prior to and independent of conceptual designation.

substrate (Tib. *kun gzhi*, Skt. *ālaya*). A vacuous, immaterial, nonconceptual state experienced in deep, dreamless sleep, when one faints, and when one dies, and in which appearances to the mind are impeded.

substrate consciousness (Tib. *kun gzhi rnam shes*, Skt. *ālayavijñāna*). An ethically neutral, inwardly directed state of consciousness, free of conceptualization, in which appearances of self, others, and objects are absent.

suchness (Tib. *de bzhin nyid*, Skt. *tathatā*). The ineffable reality of emptiness; the ultimate nature of all phenomena.

śūdra (Skt., Tib. *dmangs rigs*). A commoner, a member of the lowest Vedic caste in classical India.

suffering (Tib. *sdug bsngal*, Skt. *duḥkha*). The unsatisfying nature of saṃsāra, the first Noble Truth, consisting of blatant suffering, the suffering of change, and existential suffering.

sugata (Skt., Tib. *bde bar gshegs pa*). Lit. “well-gone one,” an epithet of a buddha meaning one who has gone to the far shore of liberation, fulfilling one's own and others' needs by achieving perfect enlightenment.

sugatagarbha (Skt., Tib. *bde gshegs snying po*). The essence, or womb, of the sugatas; synonymous with “buddha nature.”

Sukhāvatī (Skt., Tib. *bde ba can*). Lit. “Land of Bliss,” this is the buddhafield of Amitābha in the western direction.

Supreme Son Kīla (Tib. *phur pa sras mchog*). The Youthful Vajra, an activity emanation of Vajrakīla whose upper body has three faces and six arms and whose lower body is a kīla, a three-edged ritual dagger. See GD 182–83, VE 256. See also Khenpo Namdrol, *The Practice of Vajrakīlaya* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1999), 57–59.

sūtra (Skt., Tib. *mdo*). Discourses attributed to the Buddha, but not included among the tantras, many of which, according to the Vajrayāna tradition, are also attributed to the historical Buddha (as in the case of the Kālacakra Tantra) or to later emanations of the buddhas (as in the case of the *Vajra Essence*, which is described as a tantra).

svabhāva (Skt., Tib. *ngo bo nyid*). The one, absolute, essential nature of the whole of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

svabhāvikakāya (Skt., Tib. *ngo bo nyid kyi sku*). The “natural embodiment” of the buddhas, which is the one nature of the dharmakāya, saṃbhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya.

tantra (Skt., Tib. *rgyud*). A thread or continuum. An esoteric scripture belonging to the class of Vajrayāna Buddhism, as opposed to the exoteric teachings of the sūtras.

tathāgata (Skt., Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa*). Lit. “one who has gone to (or arrived at) suchness,” an epithet for a buddha.

tenet system (Tib. *grub mtha’*, Skt. *siddhānta*). The final, stated position of a school of thought or of an individual practitioner.

terma (Tib. *gter ma*). A Dharma treasure such as those hidden by Guru Rinpoché and Yeshé Tsogyal to be discovered by a predicted revealer for the benefit of future generations. Earth treasures are physical objects concealed in the environment, and mind treasures are concealed in the mindstreams of realized beings, particularly of the incarnated disciples of Padmasambhava.

tertön (Tib. *gter ston*). A revealer of treasures.

thangka (Tib. *thang ga*). A painted or embroidered Tibetan Buddhist image, usually depicting one or more deities or maṇḍalas, which can be rolled up for storage or transportation.

theurang (Tib. *the'u rang*). A type of preta.

thoughts, discursive (also “compulsive”) (Tib. *rnam rtog*, Skt. *vikalpa*). Ordinary, dualistic thoughts concerning the objects of saṃsāra.

thoughts that turn the mind, four (Tib. *blo ldog rnam pa bzhi*). Meditations on the precious human life of freedom and opportunity, death and impermanence, the miserable nature of saṃsāra, and the nature of actions and their ethical consequences.

tīrthika (Skt., Tib. *mu stegs pa*). Lit. “ford-maker,” this designation for non-Buddhist philosophies and traditions connotes those on the steps at the edge of the river of saṃsāra, which they seek to ford.

tonglen (Tib. *gtong len*). Lit. “giving and taking,” this refers to the exchange of self and others in order to reduce self-cherishing and cultivate bodhicitta, practiced by giving others one’s happiness with the out breath and taking on their sufferings with the in breath.

torma (Tib. *gtor ma*). See *baling torma* and *ransom torma*.

training in creative power (Tib. *rtsal sbyang ba*). A direct crossing over practice in which one forcefully, meditatively permeates one’s external environment and inner body with *Hūṃ* syllables, finally dissolving them all into emptiness. See VE 412–13.

training in pliability (Tib. *mnyen btsal ba*). A direct crossing over practice in which one visualizes *Hūṃ* syllables emerging from and withdrawing back into one’s heart, as a means to gain mastery over one’s vital energies and mind. See VE 413–15.

transference (Tib. *'pho ba*, Skt. *saṃkrānti*). Transference of consciousness. According to the Great Perfection, the unsurpassed transference is the realization of the pristine domain of the absolute space of phenomena, the

sugatagarbha. See CM 434, 448; VE 428, 470–78.

transference by entering the dwelling (Tib. 'pho ba grong 'jug). The culminating phase of the stage of generation. See VE 199–200.

transitional phase (Tib. bar do, Skt. antarabhāva). Any one of the six transitional phases of living, meditation, dreaming, dying, ultimate reality, and becoming. See VE 467–91.

transitional phase of becoming (Tib. srid ba bar do). The dream-like intermediate period immediately following the transitional phase of ultimate reality, in which one is on the way to one's next rebirth.

treasure revealer (Tib. gter ston). A highly realized being who reveals Dharma teachings concealed in the physical world or in the nature of mind.

truth, conventional (Tib. tha snyad bden pa). An aspect of relative truth or a simile for it, such as a name established by agreement.

truth, relative (Tib. kun rdzob bden pa, Skt. samvṛtisatya). Lit. “totally obscurational truth,” such provisional, conventional truths appear in a manner contrary to their mode of existence and thereby obscure the nature of ultimate truth. Teachings concerning names and individual, real characteristics are called relative truths. See VE 190.

truth, ultimate (Tib. don dam bden pa, Skt. paramārthasatya). The ultimate nature of emptiness, which together with relative truth constitute the two truths.

truths, two (Tib. don dam gnyis, Skt. satyadvaya). Relative truth and ultimate truth.

tsatsa (Tib. tsha tsha, Skt. saccha). A small image of an enlightened being, usually molded of clay and produced in large quantities.

tsen (Tib. btsan). A type of evil demon.

tulku (Tib. sprul sku, Skt. nirmāṇakāya). A realized being who is either firmly on the path to enlightenment or who has already achieved enlightenment and

incarnates for the sake of the world.

udumbara (Skt.). This may refer to the flower of the blue lotus (*Nila udumbara*) or of the cluster fig tree (*Ficus racemosa*), whose flowers are hidden within the fig and hence symbolize rarity.

Upāyatantrayāna (Skt., Tib. *spyod pa'i rgyud kyi theg pa*). The spiritual vehicle of the “performance tantras,” in which conduct accords with *kriyā* and view accords with *yoga*; it is perfected by realizing the nonduality of view and conduct. See CM 391; GD 284; VE 304.

upheavals (Tib. *slong*). Sudden, disturbing appearances that can be external, internal, and secret in nature; they may be wrongly attributed to gods or demons. See CM 355, GD 306, VE 332.

uṣṇīṣa (Skt., Tib. *gtsug tor*). The topknot of hair or protuberance on the crown of a buddha's head.

vadhaka (Skt., Tib. *gshed*). Lit. “executioner,” a demonic being that displays the appearances of birth and death within saṃsāra, severs the artery of liberation, and steals the breath of happiness.

vairāṭa (Skt., Tib. *mu men*). A dark blue gemstone; it is astringent in taste, its post-digestive effects are cooling, and in terms of its healing effects, it benefits illnesses from poisoning, leprosy, lymph disorders, and skin disorders. Blue beryl may match this description, but this requires further research.

Vairocana, sevenfold posture of (Tib. *rnam snang chos bdun*, Skt. *saptadharma Vairocana*). Lit. “seven dharmas of Vairocana,” with the (1) body seated in vajrāsana, (2) hands on lap with palms up, right on left, and thumbs touching, (3) spine straight, like a pile of coins, (4) shoulders spread, like a vulture's wings, (5) chin tucked in slightly, like an iron hook, (6) mouth open slightly and tongue touching the palate, and (7) eyes gazing slightly downward at a point beyond the nose.

vaiśya (Skt., Tib. *rje rigs*). A member of the Vedic caste of merchants.

vajra (Skt., Tib. *rdo rje*). A symbol of ultimate reality, with the seven attributes

of invulnerability, indestructibility, reality, incorruptibility, stability, unobstructability, and invincibility. *See* CM 385; BM 337; GD 88–89; VE 63–64, 188–89.

vajra essences (Tib. *rdo rje'i snying po*). The syllables *Om*, *Āḥ*, and *Hūṃ*. The “clear-light vajra essence” is one of seven synonyms for the Great Perfection. *See* GD 286.

vajra guru (Skt., Tib. *rdo rje'i bla ma*). A spiritual guide who is qualified to lead one in the practices of Vajrayāna.

vajra pledges, four (Tib. *dam bca' bzhi*). It is certain that (1) one without the necessary karmic propensities cannot realize the sugatagarbha, (2) one who realizes it cannot but achieve confidence, (3) one who achieves confidence cannot but become liberated, and (4) one who is liberated cannot but become enlightened. *See* BM 337, GD 221, VE 189.

vajra strands (Tib. [*rig gdangs*] *rdo rje lu gu rgyud*). Lit. “vajra lamb-strands,” alluding to the appearances of grazing sheep, this refers to the radiance, or appearance (*rig snang*), or display (*rig rtsal*), of pristine awareness. *See* VS 427–28; VE 427, 433–35.

vajrāsana (Skt., Tib. *rdo rje'i skyil krung*). The “full-lotus” seated posture, with the left foot upon the right thigh and the right foot upon the left thigh.

Vajrayāna (Skt., Tib. *rdo rje'i theg pa*). The vehicle of esoteric Buddhist teachings and practices aimed at bringing one swiftly to the state of enlightenment.

vice (Tib. *sdig pa*, Skt. *pāpam*). A nonvirtuous karma that ripens as misery and adversity in this or future lifetimes.

vidyādhara (Skt., Tib. *rig pa 'dzin pa*). A “holder of knowledge” who has ascertained the nature of pristine awareness. Nyingma tantras describe four levels of vidyādhara. In ascending order of realization, they are the matured vidyādhara, corresponding to the vision of the direct perception of ultimate reality and the first āryabodhisattva ground, known as Very Joyful; the vidyādhara with mastery over life, corresponding to the vision of progress in

meditative experience and the fifth āryabodhisattva ground, Difficult to Cultivate; the mahāmudrā vidyādhara, corresponding to the vision of reaching consummate awareness and the eighth āryabodhisattva ground, Immovable; and the spontaneously actualized vidyādhara, corresponding to the vision of extinction into ultimate reality and the tenth āryabodhisattva ground, Cloud of Dharma. See VE 350–51.

vighna (Skt., Tib. *bgegs*). Lit “obstructor,” a being among the eighty thousand types of demons that obstruct the path to liberation; they are actually mere projections of thoughts of ego-grasping, craving, and attachment.

vigraha (Skt., Tib. *’gong po*). A demonic force, or being, that arises as a projection of hatred.

vinaya (Skt., Tib. *’dul ba*). The teachings concerning rules and discipline of the Buddha’s disciples; one of the three baskets of sūtra, vinaya, and abhidharma.

vināyaka (Skt., Tib. *log ’dren*). A malevolent demon that arises from negative thoughts.

vipaśyanā (Skt., Tib. *lhag mthong*). Lit. “superior vision,” contemplative insight into fundamental aspects of reality, such as impermanence, suffering, nonself, and emptiness.

vīra (Skt., Tib. *dpa’ bo*). Lit. “heroic being,” one who shows great courage in not succumbing to mental afflictions and in striving diligently in spiritual practice. A highly realized male bodhisattva who manifests in the world in order to serve sentient beings.

vīrā (Skt., Tib. *dpa’ mo*). A female counterpart to a vīra.

visarga (Skt., Tib. *rnam bcad*). The aspirate element of a Sanskrit syllable, represented as two stacked dots (◌ḥ) and transliterated as ḥ.

vital energies, five impure saṃsāric (Tib. *ma dag pa’i ’khor ba’i rlung lnga*). Obscuring, converging, differentiating, wavering, and transforming vital energies. See CM 400, VS 554–55, VE 130–31.

vital energy (Tib. *rlung*, Skt. *prāṇa*). Energy currents in the body, included within the triad of channels, vital energies, and bindus. *See also* karmic energy (Tib. *las rlung*) and energy-mind (Tib. *rlung sems*).

vital essence (Tib. *bcud*). The vital core of phenomena such as the five elements.

wheel, ornamental (Tib. *rgyan gyi 'khor lo*). A metaphor for the qualities of a buddha. The term ornament refers to those excellent qualities, and the term wheel refers to the all-encompassing, inexhaustible nature of the outer, inner, and secret qualities.

wind (Tib. *rlung*, Skt. *vāta*). In the Āyurvedic and Tibetan medical systems, the bodily constituent, or humor, responsible for movement and change.

wisdom (Tib. *shes rab*, Skt. *prajñā*). The knowledge that determines everything included in the phenomenal world of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as being empty, identityless, and nonobjective, such that all appearances and mindsets are gradually extinguished in the space of awareness.

wisdom of pristine space (Tib. *nam mkha' rnam par dag pa'i shes rab*). The recognition and ascertainment of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as displays of space.

wisdoms, seven (Tib. *shes rab bdun*). Discerning wisdom, wisdom of realizing identitylessness, wisdom that knows reality as it is, pervasive all-seeing great wisdom, wisdom of release, wisdom of unification, and wisdom of vanquishing. *See* VE 305–7.

worship and accomplishment (Tib. *bsnyen sgrub*, Skt. *sevāsādhana*). The two aspects of sādhana practice, particularly within the context of mahāyoga. These are subdivided into four branches: worship, close worship, accomplishment, and great accomplishment. *See* GD 264–68, VE 241–44.

yakṣa (Skt., Tib. *gnod sbyin*). One of the eight classes of haughty, nonhuman beings who cause harm to human beings.

Yama (Skt., Tib. *gshin rje*). The lord of death, also called Dharmarāja and Karma Yama.

yāna (Skt., Tib. *theg pa*). A vehicle for spiritual practice leading to varying degrees of spiritual liberation and enlightenment.

yānas, nine (Tib. *theg pa dgu*). The nine spiritual vehicles include the three leading away from suffering — Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna, and Bodhisattvayāna; the three outer tantras evoking pristine awareness with austerities — kriyāyoga, upāyayoga, and yoga; and the three inner tantras — mahāyoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga. See BM 344–48; GD 279–88; VE 302–4.

yidam (Tib. *yi dam*, Skt. *iṣṭadevatā*). Personal deity.

yoga (Skt., Tib. *rnal 'byor*). Lit. “yoke,” a meditative practice involving the mind and body. One of the six higher yānas of kriyāyoga, upāyayoga, yoga, mahāyoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga.

Yogayāna (Skt., Tib. *rnal 'byor yo ga'i theg pa*). The spiritual vehicle taught in the “yoga tantras,” which is perfected by recognizing the profound view as being of greatest importance.

yogin (Skt., Tib. *rnal 'byor pa*). A man who is adept in the practice of yoga.

yoginī (Skt., Tib. *rnal 'byor ma*). A woman who is adept in the practice of yoga.

yojana (Skt., Tib. *dpag tshad*). An ancient Indian measure of a day's range for an ox cart, about five miles.

youthful vase kāya (Tib. *gzhon nu bum pa'i sku*, Skt. *kumārakalāśakāya*). This term is unique to the Great Perfection tradition, referring to the state of enlightenment. It is like a “vase,” for, as the sole bindu, it encompasses the whole of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, while transcending the three times. It is called “youthful,” for it is not subject to aging or degeneration, and it is called a “kāya,” for it is the aggregate of all the inexhaustible enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities of all the buddhas. Its six characteristics are that it is (1) superior to the ground, (2) appearing as one's own essential nature, (3) discerning, (4) liberated in activity, (5) not emerging from anything else, and (6) dwelling in one's own ground. See CM 396, 446; GD 148–49; VE 351.

Alternately, according to the dictionary *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (p. 2432), this refers to the awareness of Samantabhadra, which is of the oceanic nature of the kāyas and facets of primordial consciousness, with six qualities: (1) externally luminous consciousness is withdrawn into itself, and the great, internally luminous, original absolute space of awareness of the ground appears to itself; (2) it transcends the ground; (3) it differentiates; (4) it is liberated upward; (5) it arises from nothing else; and (6) it dwells in its own place.

ENUMERATIONS

Ones

bindu (sole)

taste

Twos

accumulations

goals

obscurations

primordial consciousness, facets of truths

Threes

appearances, modes of appearances

doors of liberation Jewels

modifications

primordial consciousness, facets of realms

Roots
samādhis

secrets

sweet offerings white offerings ***Fours***

activities, enlightened confidences

empowerments

immeasurables

mindfulness, kinds of miraculous power, bases of occasions

thoughts that turn the mind vajra pledges

Fives

deeds of immediate retribution dregs
elements, derivative elements, great kāyas
natures, essential perfections of the saṃbhogakāya poisons
primordial consciousness, facets of quintessences
space of awareness, facets of vital energies, impure saṃsāric **Sixes**

lamps

perfections

primordial consciousness, facets of ***Sevens***

enjoyments

inner preliminaries precious substances Vairocana, sevenfold posture of
wisdoms

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Nines

activity, kinds of yānas

Tens

abodes of Heruka fields

perfections

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